PART OF THE PROBLEM, PART OF THE SOLUTION

Religion Today and Tomorrow

Arvind Sharma

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Contents

Introduction

Arvind Sharma

All of us are familiar with the cataclysmic events of September 11, 2001, now etched in our collective memory. One of the many results the event produced was to put religion in the spotlight.

It soon became apparent, however, that not only was religion in the spotlight, it was increasingly being viewed in the media and the academia in a negative light. Many students and practitioners of religion were dismayed by this development, for it seemed that people were being subjected to half-truths—and were left holding the wrong half, so far as many of us were concerned. Religion was surely part of the problem but the exclusive focus on its negative dimension seemed dangerously myopic, for it foreclosed the possibility of engaging it in a way that it could also become part of the solution. The title of such books as *When Religion Becomes Evil* by Charles Kimball left one subliminally sedimented with the impression that religion was itself evil. This trend has continued and four books which have appeared recently highlight this all the more: *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins; *The End of Faith* by Sam Harris; *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* by Daniel Dennett; and *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* by Christopher Hitchens. It may have been in small print at the time, but the handwriting on the wall was already clear by 2003.

Religion, however, is a force in human affairs which can be harnessed for both good and evil. This dual possibility lies latent in virtually every human invention from the very beginning of human life to this day, from the discovery of fire to that of the atom. But what is true of human inventions is equally true of human institutions.

It needed to be urgently emphasized that religion can *also* be a force for good lest the midwife of modernity, in its eagerness to create a brand new world, throw away the baby with the bathwater. Moreover, it needed to be demonstrated that religions can come together. It also needed to be demonstrated that even the modern divide between the religious and the secular could possibly be overcome. This idea fell on fertile soil, which has been worked over a few years ago by the project on Religion and Human Rights. This project, based in New York, concluded its deliberations with a conference on the Dialogue of Religion and Human Rights from May 22 to 24, 1994. "Positive Resources of Religion for Human Rights" was one of the four themes explored by the project.

Members of the project were encouraged to continue promoting the dialogue between religion and human rights even after the conclusion of the project. When the World Congress on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights met from December 7 to 9, 1998, in Montreal, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, a proposal was mooted to frame a complementary Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions. This proposal had been slowly gathering steam and, after the events of September 11, 2001, it seemed an ideal project to demonstrate that religions can work together if they came together to produce such a declaration, and to demonstrate further that the religious-secular divide could also be overcome if this was to happen, for such a declaration could only be produced by a convergence of religious and secular discourse.

Thus was set in motion a process which culminated in the holding of a global congress on World's Religions After September 11, at the Palais des Congrès in Montreal, which showcased a draft of a proposed Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions for further discussion. This was by no means the only concern of the congress. It had the following eight main themes: (1) Religion and Human Rights; (2) Proselytization and Religious Freedom; (3) Religion, Dîn, Dao, or Dharma? (4) Religion and Spirituality; (5) Religion and Science; (6) Religion and Healing; (7) Religion and Women; and (8) Religion and the Media. Additional themes included (1) Religion, Children and Youth; (2) Religion, Conflict and Peace; (3) Religion and International Diplomacy; (4) Religion in the Field; (5) Religion and War; (6) Religion and Ethics; and (7) Contemporary Religious Leaders. Moreover, panel discussions on two contemporary issues, as controversial as they were topical, were also included in the congress program: World's Religions, Human Rights and Same-Sex Marriage and Perspectives on the Conflict in the Middle East.

This volume of the proceedings of the congress covers the plenary sessions. These sessions constituted the highlight of the congress for many and we hope that the proceedings of these sessions, contained in this volume, constitute a worthwhile legacy of the congress, which was attended by 2,025 delegates from eighty-four countries.

1

There Is No "Clash of Civilizations"

Shirin Ebadi

Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, Dear Professor Sharma, President of the Congress, Dear colleagues, Dear students, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor to be here today, at the beginning of this congress, and to speak with you tonight. It is of vital importance to have meetings such as the one today, given that some believe in the theory of the clash of civilizations and the clash of religions and beliefs. I therefore would like to extend my gratitude to all those who facilitated the current meeting. Dear friends, those who seek to attain their group interest through the flames of war focus on the differences among religions and beliefs, and therefore make a failed attempt to make others believe in the theory of the clash of civilizations. By justifying their theory, they argue that the clashes and conflicts in the Middle East are the results of the clash of civilizations. Their argument is incorrect. The roots of the wars in the Middle East lie in economic interest and power. History too does not endorse the theory of the clash of civilizations, for Muslims and Jews lived peacefully together for centuries in the Middle East. The current differences between them are not the result of religion nor the civilization to which they belong, but rather have a political source that emanates after the end of the Cold War. Also, elsewhere in Asia, Muslims have coexisted completely peacefully with followers of other faiths and beliefs in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia or Thailand, with Buddhists and with Confucianists, and this has been so for centuries. The wars between Muslims or Christians in previous centuries were not because of religion, but rather because of an intent for territorial expansion or supremacy. Politicians always took advantage of the religious beliefs and convictions of people to make it serve their goals, just as today too, religion is used to advance political interests.

The theory of the clash of civilizations is one such case. The theory of the clash of civilizations came about in fact after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The end of one enemy led to a vacuum in politics, and especially in the foreign policy of the United States, that needed another enemy in order to endorse its policies. A group sought to replace the old enemy with a new enemy in order to justify a united front to face an enemy and, through such justification, to increase military expenditures and to justify the supremacy that the United States sought in its foreign policy. It also led to internal control, the control of individual freedoms and limits on the rights of people to speak. This is how the theory of the clash of civilizations gradually took shape, theories that emanate from the enemies of Islam but gradually succeed in creating hostility. Since every violent action creates a more violent reaction, the world today is in an abyss of hostility, as we witness now. In this mix, the voices of enlightened Muslim thinkers and intellectuals were not heard enough, for this group had to fight for its own ideological belief. The current congress gives a very good opportunity to Muslim intellectuals to interact with followers of other creeds and beliefs in order to find commonalities, so that we can all in one voice say that the followers of all beliefs and religions have many commonalities and that we can all live in peace together. I wish success for all our participants here and would like to open the conference with these words and hope that, through your guidance, the world will be able to move toward more peace. Wishing peace for you and the entire world. Thank you very much.

2

To Secularize Religion and Spiritualize Politics

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Dear Dean of Religious Studies, Dr. Sharma, and my brothers and sisters. World's Religions After September 11th is what we're seeing today. But I would say, for centuries, religion has been a very deep subject. People have given their lives for religion, not for mathematics, physics, chemistry, or any other discipline, because religion becomes an identity factor. Now is it possible for us to lift this identity to another level? This is what we need to look at, too. Whenever someone identifies oneself with a country, religion, race, or sex, they forget one basic thing, that they are all human beings. So I will say that our first and foremost identity should be: we're all part of one spirit, one God, one light. And the second place of the identities: we are all human beings. And the third: we are man and woman. And then the nation. And in the fifth place, we can place religion. I belong to this or that religion. Then the world will be a safer place.

Fanaticism in any one religion finds its shadow in other religions, too. This is the problem today. Fanaticism in religion causes terrorism in politics. Today what we need is to secularize religion and spiritualize politics. Politicians should be more spiritual. By spiritual, I mean to say, honoring the values of compassion, nonviolence, brotherhood, love, and sense of belongness. Regular identity goes to the basic identity that we are part of one divinity. Naturally, nonviolence plays an important part. As you have already heard today, Mahatma Gandhi's launching of nonviolent agitation in South Africa; also about Swami Vivekananda. India has been an example for communal harmony for centuries. Perhaps it was the only country where nobody was ever

persecuted. But even in such a place, there are disturbances today. That's because we're losing spirituality. We are getting ourselves clumped into region, language, or even sects within religion. There was only one Buddha. Today there are thirty-two sects of Buddhism. There was only one Jesus, but there are nearly seventy different denominations of Christianity. But can we live in harmony in this diversity is a big question. I think that religious study institutions and religious gatherings like this will have to discuss and come up with a plan to bring harmony in diversity to the world in the future.

Someone asked me the other day: "It's ok that like-minded people will be coming to this gathering, but what do you do about those people who do not subscribe to these ideas? They are the ones who need this most." It's a very correct question. Yes, how do we reach those people? This was in my mind for a long time. Then you know what I did? We went to the prisons where the hardcore criminals were, and we started educating them. It's stress and narrow-mindedness that has caused so much rift between people. And it takes the form of religion. Today, you'll see, the domestic violence in any country is much more than the violence caused by religious fanaticism. If you compare the domestic violence, you'll see it's on the rise. Or suicidal tendencies. Suicidal tendencies, domestic violence, and social crimes are all the result of a lack of spirituality, lack of understanding, and lack of honor to life. Have we done anything to bring up human values and teach our kids to honor life? This is a big question we need to ask ourselves.

We have globalized economies. We have globalized technology. We have globalized food, music, everything but wisdom. If every child knows a little bit about all other religions, he'll not grow up to be a fanatic. He will not say, "Only I go to Heaven and everybody else is going to Hell." Hell for everybody else. I really feel sorry for those children, those young people who grow up thinking that they are better, with a holier-than-thou attitude. This is merely because of ignorance, lack of globalizing wisdom. I would say every child should know a little bit about Buddhism, a little bit about Hinduism, a little bit about Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Shintoism, and so forth. Don't you think so? Globalizing wisdom is what we need the most today. If the youth in Afghanistan had known a little bit about Buddha, they wouldn't have gone and destroyed Bamian Buddha. It was because they had no idea about Buddha's teachings. Technology, truth, traits, and traditions need to be revised, and revised again and again. We need to reinterpret them according to time. In Sanskrit we say: "Considering time and space, revision of scriptures has to be done. Understanding has to be modified." So today we need to globalize wisdom.

I have a question to you all. We accept music from every part of the world. We go and eat food in Chinese restaurants. You don't need to be Danish to eat Danish cookies. You don't need to be Canadian to eat maple syrup. So when we accommodate food and technology and everything, why don't we globalize wisdom? It's not possible to study in depth all religions but a general understanding is definitely possible. The essence of religion is spirituality.

Religion is like the banana skin and spirituality is like the banana. Finally, I would say that we do need a bit of humor in religion. Most of the problem in the world occur when there is no humor. Religious communities or congregations should come up with beaming smiles. We often find people really serious, so a small thing like a cartoon can create so much insult. If we have more humor, we will tackle humor with humor. It need not create violence in the society. Communication will become better. And the dean and the learned professors here can take up this cause of bringing our religions together, of educating throughout the world. Even if a small part of the world is left without ecumenical education, the world will not be a safe place to live. So each one of us, when we go from here, let's take this global idea of wisdom. My ancient Hindu tradition has said, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam:* "The whole world is one family." And we're all different. We follow different streams of thought, yet we are part of one world family. The ancient Hindu texts emphasize on this: harmony in diversity. With these few words, I thank you all for giving me an opportunity to be with you. Thank you.

3

Religion Is Central to Human Affairs

Didiji

My Divine Brothers and Sisters, Namaskar!

Today I stand here to represent Revered Pandurang Shastri Athavale—Dadaji, my father, and Swadhyaya, the grassroots initiative he founded in India in the early forties of the last century. His life was expression of his love for God and mankind. He inspired Swadhyayees to love and work selflessly in the society and live as one divine family. I bring with me love and greetings of this family of millions of Swadhyayees from across the world.

We have gathered here to discuss and understand issues that are of immense importance for the existence and well-being of mankind. I take it that behind the invitation extended to me, the conveners of this Congress too have recognized the contribution and the potential of Swadhyaya. I deeply and sincerely thank them.

Quest for development and improvement of quality of life on this planet has been a constant driving force of humankind. Many initiatives have been taken in that direction by various concerned agencies. Science and technology is one such agency that has succeeded in lowering the barriers of geographical distance and has made the world a global village. It has eased the way for globalizing any idea or concept. Industry, trade, commerce, and services have taken lead in this drive toward globalization. Different cultures from different parts of the world too have found their way to distant hearts and minds.

However, in the last few decades or so we have witnessed widespread resistance to changes taking place in the name of development, modernization, nation-building, and world order in different global settings. The resistance has taken many shapes. Convulsions resulting from the rise of fundamentalism in almost all the major religions of the world seem to be one of them. Religion,

in one form or the other, is as old as the humanity and is an inseparable part of human life. It has a profound impact on individual life as well as social arrangements. Any idea of development that does not consider this aspect of human life tends to generate resistance. Even today, the role of religion has not diminished in human affairs. Indeed, it is not only involved and concerned with human problems but has also deeply affected contemporary developments.

At one level, September 11 could be seen as a metaphor of this resistance that has also triggered an accelerated search for some kind of lightning rod to cope with certain hurt religious feelings. At another level it has served to emphasize the centrality of religions in human affairs. It has forced us to accept or rather concede that religions do play a significant role in human life—an integrative role as society's essential enzyme and, at the same time, a disintegrative role leading to contemporary dilemmas and unrest.

If, then, religions have so many facets, the question is: what is religion? Despite serious threat of being undermined by science and technology, why has it survived? We need to better our understanding of it. Instead of getting into any typology, I will limit my search for definitions of religion within my own tradition, that is, the "Indic" tradition. Our commonly used word for religion is "dharma," though it is an unsatisfactory synonym of the word "religion" as understood today. Be that as it may, for us "dharma" is a meta-idea that includes philosophy, spirituality, and practices.

> *Yato Abhyudaya Nisreyasa Siddhi Sa Dharma.* It is that which leads to success in material as well as spiritual life.
>
> *Dharanat Dharma Ityahu, Dharmo Dharayate Praja.* It is that which sustains the individual and the society, that is, self-development and social good.
>
> *Na Manushyat Paro Dharmah.* There is no greater religion than human religion.

These facets of "dharma" are not unique or exclusive to Indic faith traditions. Such a list only illustrates a significant overlap between ideas inherent in "dharma" with the ideas of, say, justice and prosperity inherent in Judaic tradition, all-embracing and self-effacing love of "agape," solidarity and compassion in "Quran," noninjury in holy books of Jains, the idea of service in Sikhism, and compassion in Buddhism.

Indeed, at least at the level of shared values it is not difficult to find and cite similarities between various faith traditions. It only serves to emphasize that at one level the meaning of religion is anchored in relatively similar humanistic/spiritual/ethical values such as love, justice, sharing, equity, and peace—a feeling of oneness with entire reality. The integrative aspects of these values have helped people to live in harmony with "the other" on the basis of inspirations derived from different sources of spiritual insights located in different cultural, historical, or psychosocial backgrounds.

However, today, religion is popularly understood in almost sectarian sense. This leads to such arrangements, sanctified by legal systems or conventions that seek to keep away religions from public arena. What is sought is to treat religion as a matter of private conscience, to avoid violent contestations and encourage tolerance, if not respect, of the other. This is seen as the most feasible way of co-living in an increasingly multicultural, globalized world. However, it is apparent now that the separation of the private and the public has been most difficult to achieve.

Rev. Dadaji believed that religion is the necessity of human life. According to him:

Religion is that which upholds human dignity;
it is that which inculcates love for life;
it is that which kindles righteousness;
it is that which teaches to live in adversity;
it is that which imparts moral and ethical education.

His view of religion is, and I quote:

> Even as mankind is achieving greater heights in material sphere, human bonding is cracking at every level. Religion that instills self-esteem evokes emotion and sublimates ego will strengthen this bonding and bring man closer to man. . . without which the social structure will continue to collapse bit by bit, men and women will continue to be pitched in conflict with themselves, with community and with the Creator.
>
> Religion is meant to give an intellectual introduction to God and reveal the relationship of the Self with the Divine and with the fellow human beings.

In his opinion, the religions also go through various phases in human society. Whenever the philosophical and rational base of the religion is eroded, the intellectuals distance themselves from the religion. Such a religion becomes ritualistic and it drives away the youth as well. Whenever religion becomes otherworldly and filled with superstitions, it looses its relevance in the contemporary context.

It is our experience that exclusion of any religion from public arena is extremely difficult to achieve. Therefore it would be more relevant to examine, given the basic harmony and unity of experiences of human beings, how we can achieve a participatory understanding of humanistic values of world's religions and relate the individual with the other in the larger order of the cosmos.

Since we have not been able to achieve that, we have problem of sustainable peace; we have the issues related to justice; we have to demand equality; and we have to fight against discrimination. Every nation on this earth faces these challenges. And there is a dominant feeling of the political and financial establishment world over that globalization is the solution to these challenges.

Economy, trade, and industry have taken the lead in spreading their wings across the globe. It promises to eventually eradicate poverty and ensure justice and equity for all. These promises are not believed by those who have suffered displacement, including cultural displacement and they have turned opponents of the concept of globalization. The people promoting globalization tend to blame religion as one of the main sources of such resistance. And those who want religion to be the mainstay of humanity blame economic globalization for many of today's dilemmas.

These challenges have evoked half-hearted and uneven responses from world's religions. As of now, these religions seem haunted by two fixations—preoccupation with established religious frameworks, rituals, and procedures and how to prevent attraction of its followers for any new thought or new forms of spirituality. Grown out of alienation, mainly from mainline sectarian and denominational constraints, these new forms of spirituality seek spiritual wisdom of other faiths and from other sources of knowledge without formally giving up the faith of their birth. They also seek creative interpretations from tenets of their own faith traditions. Such creative syntheses by these forms of spirituality become meaningful because of their deep commitment to various social action programmes. The faith establishments either ignore or oppose such forms of spirituality but they are often unable to prevent them from attracting mass following. As a result, usually, serious efforts are made to woo them and to co-opt these forms of spiritualities as part of the larger mainline faith.

The initiative that I represent, Swadhyaya, too, is one such phenomenon that is based on *Vedantic* ideals of universal divinity and universal humanity which, in active and dynamic interaction, promote both spirituality and sociality. We owe it to one person—Rev. Pandurang Shastri Athavale—Dadaji.

We have our own views on globalization, eradication of poverty, peace, justice, and equality. We believe that the essential aspect of globalization is acceptance of the other. Mere acceptance of existence of the other is not sufficient. One has to learn to view the other as oneself; one has to learn to relate with the other. This presupposes an internal change in the mind-set of people and unless it is brought about, we will neither have peace nor justice. Tolerance of the other is a quality born mainly out of helplessness and is devoid of warmth, love, and care. This leads to neutrality in relations, which is not a desirable situation. The point is how to bring man closer to man in a loving and unselfish relationship.

For us, peace is maintenance of equilibrium within and without, and the way to peace is through harmony and justice. For Dadaji, peace is neither mere absence of violence nor mere nonviolent resolution of conflicts. For him, peace is building of loving and cohesive relationships in and across societies.

It is apparent that Dadaji has put great emphasis on selfless relationship, equality, and unity. For a Swadhyayee, the other is a divine brother and one is encouraged to relate the divine in the other with the divine within oneself. It makes one trust the positive in everyone. Out of such feelings more than sixty years ago, Dadaji started his journey. For him, this inner journey was not to be

a lonely and meditative pursuit. He instilled this understanding and feeling in everyone that came in touch with him.

Different people have different ideas of the divine and the sacred. Dadaji derived his understanding of indwelling presence of God from the Indic wisdom. Through inculcating this understanding, Dadaji could instill self-esteem, sense of dignity, and self-worth in a common man. He also took care that this sense of self-esteem does not inflate into problematic ego. He fully recognized the possibilities and pitfalls of ego. Therefore, he stressed the need and awareness of *swa* or self not based on cultural isolationism but on an expansion of the idea of self. He sought to reorient ego by relating it to a "self" that is divine. Through an activist orientation of "bhakti"—devotion—he sought to make bhakti the vehicle of non-egocentric, collective constructive activities. Indeed, bhakti is the foundational term in Swadhyaya. He gave new meaning to the idea of bhakti. His idea of bhakti is not that of a passive agency that promotes retreat or reduces it to observance of rituals. For him, bhakti is a loving expression of gratefulness to God and such expression finds its way through meditative worship and action-oriented devotion that is radically different from the ritualistic worship.

Bhaktipheri or devotional outreach is Swadhyaya's main activation agency. Swadhyaya places very high value on face-to-face personal contacts in contrast to impersonal, formal contacts, as bonds of mutual trust are most vital for development of sustainable community initiatives. Swadhyayee activists (*krutsheels*) travel repeatedly on their own initiative and own resources to villages, towns, and cities to link with others in the divine family. This family, ever expanding, is inclusive and admits of no economic and social barrier and has embraced nearly twenty million people in twenty-two countries across the globe with more than 600,000 activist *krutisheels.* It has empowered millions of people and has successfully developed communities that cut across caste rigidities. Dadaji notably focused on the marginal communities and the dispossessed. He never insisted upon them to change their lifestyles. While meeting economic and social problems of various microcommunities head on, he never sought external financial or material assistance. Though by now, spread over nearly 100,000 villages and among Indian expatriate communities in all continents, Swadhyaya has maintained a low profile, notably in the "development community." That is the way Dadaji wanted it.

The action-oriented devotion finds its expression in various socioeconomic programmes. One may not have riches to offer to God, but, everyone has one's efficiency to offer in the form of devotion to God. Farmers devote their efficiency—farming skill—to God and generate impersonal wealth for distribution to the needy as Prasad—benefaction of God (in contrast to charity or loans) through the experiment of Yogeshwar Krushi (Farms of God). There are nearly 10,000 such farms in India today. Likewise fishermen, artisans, skilled and semiskilled workers give their efficiency in various other experiments connected with their respective fields of skills. Doctors, chartered accountants, engineers, and other professionals too give their excellence as devotional

offering to the Creator. All experiments under the aegis of Swadhyaya are devotion based and involve offering in form of time and efficiency. The *krutisheels* derive satisfaction of performing worship of God, at the same time, the experiments generate impersonal wealth. The undercurrent is that of doing God's work and not social service. Work for God would continue forever and that is why we know that through Swadhyaya, the work for humanity would continue for a long time to come.

The understanding of indwelling presence of divine creates self-worth, and the understanding of divine pervasiveness magnifies such self-worth. It changes the outlook toward the other and the nature. Science told us that there is life in plants and vegetation, Dadaji inspired us to see God in them. Out of this understanding, Vruksha mandirs (tree temples), Shree Darshanam (Divine Communes), and Madhav Vrund (tree plantations) have come into existence so far. These experiments bring people from twenty surrounding villages into forming a kind of divine commune. Here the trees and plants are nurtured and worshipped as manifestation of God. Millions of trees have been planted in the past decade by Swadhyayees with almost 100 percent survival rate. These experiments also address the complex problem of ecology. At world level, these experiments can be viewed as a nursery, but in terms of validation of a principle, it has a great significance.

There are nearly twenty such experiments inspired by Dadaji covering such wide areas as augmenting community water resources, vocational training, dairy farming, potable water supply, drainage, sanitation, informal education, etc., that are changing the socioeconomic face of the society. Dadaji's insights are effective through these experiments to increase self-esteem and counteract conventional social ills like alcoholism, domestic violence, gambling, petty crime, ethnic violence, etc. Swadhyaya reveals that devotion can influence all spheres of human life and can lead to holistic reconstruction and development of the society.

Swadhyaya embraces everyone: children, the youth, women, marginal sections of the society, people from different faith establishments, villagers and city-dwellers, in short, the cross section of society. It brings man closer to man in a selfless loving relationship of a divine family.

There are about 25,000 cultural centers of children the world over in which about 850,000 children, on an average, become culturally enriched.

Alienation of youth from the culture is the concern of thinkers world over and everyone finds it difficult if not impossible to address this concern. At such a time nearly 2.5 million youth participating in about 27,000 youth cultural centers and related activities can be considered an achievement of Swadhyaya and blessing of God.

Active participation of women in major way is strength of Swadhyaya. Today more than 250,000 young and elderly women involve their time and talents in Swadhyaya.

Aadivaasis and Vanvaasis (forest dwellers) have been rerooted to their culture through Swadhyaya and together with other marginal communities they have been made a part of mainstream society.

And all of the above has become possible only because Dadaji created a family different from an institution or social organization. Relationship based on devotion is the foundation of the Swadhyaya family. What he has done in essence is to inspire us to view the sacred not only in the idols or holy books but in the entire universe. By instilling the understanding of relation with the other through the indwelling presence of common divine in all, he could create a vast family of millions and community living assumed a radically different meaning. The understanding of divine relationship is a revolutionary thought wherein there is no discrimination; no generation gap; no barriers of caste, creed, class, color, education; and all live as children of one God. This is the emotional revolution. Dadaji brought the devotion out from the narrow confines of ritualistic observance and made it a powerful and all encompassing aspect of human life.

He has proved that bhakti is a social force. This is what Dadaji proclaimed at the World's Religions Congress in Japan in 1954 and we Swadhyayees experience this in all our endeavors. It is our endeavor to create a nursery of the alternate society that Dadaji worked for. Since it is an uncharted course, we expect hurdles and opposition. But understanding of God's nearness and selfless love for humanity as Dadaji taught us is our enduring strength.

It is practically impossible for anyone, even to imagine of one world-religion. Different regions, societies, communities would continue to have different religions. Religions would continue to give moral orders and regulate conduct of the individual and the society and would continue to strive to create good human beings. Every religion and faith-establishment should not only accept the existence of other religions and faith-establishments but should also have catholicity to accept the profound insights of world's great spirits. If we can do that, we can certainly hope for a much better world with harmony, peace, justice, and equity.

From our own experience, we believe that inculcation of the understanding of bhakti or devotion in every person would be indispensable toward achieving such a goal. We are, in our own way, incessantly striving to give shape to the vision of Dadaji and create such an alternate society.

On behalf of the Swadhyaya pariwar, I take this opportunity to invite you to join us, whenever the spirit moves you, to witness and experience the transformation that is taking place wherever Swadhyaya has struck roots.

4

Religion Is About How You Behave: The Essential Virtue Is Compassion

Karen Armstrong

On this day, which commemorates that terrible atrocity in which religion became associated with horror, violence, and hatred, I was reminded of an event in the fifth century BCE in Athens. Every year, on the festival of Dionysus, god of transformation, as part of a religious celebration, all Athenian citizens were required to attend the tragedies, tragic dramas put on each year which usually reflected in a mythical form some of the dilemmas of the city at that time. Five years after the battle of Salamis, when the Greeks had eventually defeated the very mighty Persian army, Aeschylus put on his play, the Persians, and there was no hint of gloating, no triumphalism. Five years earlier, the Persians had rampaged through Athens, had vandalized the city, and had destroyed the beautiful new buildings, the new temples built on the Acropolis. But Aeschylus presents the Persians as a people in mourning, a people like the Greeks themselves, a sister people to the Greeks. And the defeated hero of Persia, Xerxes, is led, with great honor and respect, into his house. And I think we have to ask ourselves, whether it would be possible for such a play to be put on today.

We don't usually think of the Greeks contributing to the Axial Age (c. 900 to 200 BCE), that extraordinary transformative period in religious consciousness, when the great world traditions that have continued to nourish humanity either came into being or had their roots. But in their tragic drama, they came close to the essential core spirit that lies at the heart of all our traditions, that religion is not about what you believe, or what you think. It's about how you behave, and the essential virtue is compassion.

One of the very first people, as far as we know, to make it absolutely crystal clear that religion was essentially altruism was Confucius. And it was he, who,

again, as far as we know, was first to promulgate the golden rule: Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you. And most of the world traditions have come in their own way to formulate this rule. Confucius was asked, "What was the essential thread that bound all your teaching together, Master?" And he said, "*Shu,* likening to the self." Look into your own heart. Discover what it is that gives *you* pain, and then refrain, under any circumstances whatsoever, from inflicting that pain upon anybody else. "Do not do to others, as you would not have done to you." "Master," said one of his disciples, "which one of your teachings can we put into practice all day and everyday?" And, again, Confucius said, "Do not do to others, what you would not have done to you." The practice of the Golden Rule teaches us to dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and put another there. It is this which would introduce people to the Dao, the ultimate reality. The Buddha came to the same conclusion, when he said it was by compassion that we reach *ceto-vimutti,* the release of the mind, which, in the early Buddhist scriptures, is a synonym for the ultimate enlightenment of nirvana. But all these sages insisted that it was not enough simply to confine your compassion and benevolence to your own group. You must have what one Chinese sage called *jian ai,* concern for everybody, because love for your own group or people with whom you agree becomes simply a form of group egotism, and it is egotism that imprisons us in ourselves and holds us back from the divine.

In Jewish law, we're told to love the stranger. "If a stranger lives with you in your land," says Leviticus, "do not molest him. You must treat him as one of your own people and love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt." And it's the same principle of empathy. Look into your own heart, your own past. Remember what it was that gave you pain when you were strangers in Egypt and then apply that understanding of your own pain to the understanding of the other. The word love here needs a little decoding. Leviticus is a legal text, and we were not required to emote or to feel filled with warm tender affection for the stranger. The word love was used in international treaties and it implied that kings and allies would look out for each other's interests, give them practical support and help, and that is something to which we can all aspire. "Love your enemies," said Jesus. Give your love, concern, and benevolence where there is no hope of any return. And that is the task of religion in our day. The great Rabbi Hillel, the older contemporary of Jesus, was one day approached by a pagan, who promised to convert to Judaism on condition that the rabbi recited the whole of Jewish teaching while he stood on one leg. Hillel stood on one leg and replied: "That which is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour. That is the Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and study it." And that's an extraordinary statement—no mention of God, or the creation of the world in six days, or the 613 compartments of the Torah, or the Promised Land. "Do not do unto others, as you would not have done to you." And in the endless performance of that duty to compassion, you will encounter the divine.

While researching my last book, I was astonished to learn that during the Axial Age, every single one of the major world traditions that developed during

this time began its reform with a principled revulsion from the violence of their time. These were very violent societies, violence that seems pitiful, compared with what we're facing today, and yet it shocked the people of the Axial Age. And in searching for a cure for violence in the human psyche, the sages began to discover the inner world and a whole range of inner peace, but compassion lay always at the core.

Today the challenge is to apply the golden rule globally. In the Axial Age, the individual was coming to the fore. People were beginning to discover themselves as autonomous individuals, and one of the Axial Age's concerns was to prevent the clash of warring egos in a newly urbanized society. And now we're living in one world, and what happens today in Afghanistan or Iraq or Palestine will have repercussions tomorrow in London, New York, or Washington. We all share the same predicament, and that means that it is a religious duty not to treat others as we would not wish to be treated ourselves, to realize that other nations are as important as our own. This is the only way we're going to bring peace to our world and this is the religious challenge.

I'd like to conclude with two stories. When the Prophet Muhammad finally conquered Mecca, he eventually abandoned violence and adopted a course of nonviolence that was worthy of Gandhi. Mecca opened its gates to him voluntarily, and he went and stood beside the Kaaba and he invited his tribe, the Quraysh, to enter Islam. No one was forced or coerced, but Muhammad invited them. "Oh Quraysh," he said, "God is calling you from the chauvinism of paganism, with its pride in ancestors. But remember: All men come from Adam and Adam came from dust." And then he recited these words from the Qur'an, where God says to humanity, "Oh people, we have created you from a male and a female and have formed you into tribes and nations, so that you may know one another." Not so that you may terrorize or convert or exploit or colonize or dominate, but so that you may know one another, because when we live together in community, we inevitably come up against uncongenial people, and that experience enables us to deal with the more challenging Other that we meet in other tribes or nations.

My second story comes from the Hebrew Bible, a story of Abraham, regarded as the father of believers by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. It's said that one day, Abraham was sitting outside his tent in Mamre, near Hebron, and saw three strangers on the horizon. Strangers are frightening people at any time. Very few of us today would take three total strangers off the streets and bring them into our own home. But Abraham ran out, in the heat of the Middle Eastern afternoon, and prostrated himself before these three strangers, as though they were gods or kings. And then he brought them back into his encampment and gave them, not just a sandwich or a glass of water, but poured out for them an elaborate meal, giving these three total strangers all the love and refreshment that he could for their journey. And I think it is of the utmost importance that these people were strangers. The word in Hebrew, kadosh, holy, as used in the "holiness of God," means "separate," "other." And sometimes, the initial revulsion or fear that we may feel, when we encounter the

stranger, can give us intimations of that holiness that is God. Thus the effort to understand and reach out to the other, to reach out to enemies, should become not just a political but a spiritual process. We don't need any new prophets, any new revelations. We all simply need to uncover the call of compassion that lies at the heart of all our great religious traditions. Thank you.

5

Religion and Human Rights

Shirin Ebadi

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I'd like to seize the opportunity to express my deepest sorrow over the recent events in Lebanon and to express my condolence to the relatives of the victims from both sides of the war. In every war, the real losers are the people. There are only arms dealers and salesmen that reap the benefits of wars. These arms dealers have reaped billions of dollars in benefits as a result of this recent war that destroyed the beautiful country in Lebanon and led to huge civilian loss from both sides of the war.

Dear colleagues, an understanding of different cultures is the path, the way for peace, and I'd like to seize this opportunity to thank all those who facilitated holding the meeting in this beautiful city and everyone at McGill University.

When we look at the world map and different countries, we realize that many countries across the Muslim world are accused of severe violations of human rights. This begs a fundamental question: Is Islam truly incompatible with human rights? The question therefore is: Are Islamic countries capable of being democratic or not? Some Muslims hold to the belief that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with democracy, for democracy connotes a majority rule by the will of the majority. That majority, too, can at times be wrong. The followers of this belief do not have the tolerance to hold themselves open to other systems of thoughts and beliefs and choose to regard the realities of the world and the rise of their predecessors. This group of people does not believe that the elected authorities by the people, including members of parliament, have a lot of rights in creating laws. They believe that the maximum responsibility of the parliament lies in identifying divine laws and legislating in accordance, and nothing more. In other words, they believe that the

parliament does not have the right to make laws separate from divine laws. The unfavorable situation of democratization and democracy in some Islamic countries is the result of such thinking. And of course, to this group, Islam is only the interpretation of the religion that government offers and any other interpretation offered by other individuals or groups is considered as invalid. With this thinking, anyone who opposes government thinking is accused of heresy and blasphemy and (is considered) bad. This is how they force political dissidents into silence and strip away the courage of the ordinary people. After all, it is known that people are happier to oppose secular systems and earthly ones, rather than religious systems that are given to them by their ancestors.

Against this group is a new group of progressive Muslim thinkers and intellectuals who form a united front which is borderless and belongs to all Islamic countries. The establishment of a united front of Muslim progressive thinkers, regardless of nationality, but sharing in the belief of upholding human dignity for all Muslims, heralds a new era for Islam. This united front does not have a name, does not have a leader, nor a central office nor branches. Rather, it resides in the hearts and minds of every individual who seeks to uphold the sanctity of their ancient religion, but at the same time, uphold true religious values and democratic ones and not accept any wrongful interpretation of religion. In fact, Islam is a religion of equality. The Prophet Muhammad always said that there really is no difference between a black person and a white person or an Arab and a non-Arab. After taking over Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad set up to establish an Islamic government who he himself led, as well as the affairs of the society. And he called for *bay'ah* from all the people, including Muslims and non-Muslims, and *bay'ah* in modern terms means to give a vote. History shows that there were individuals who chose not to give the *bay'ah,* but, nevertheless, enjoyed the right to live freely in those lands.

The Prophet Muhammad respected women tremendously, and even sought their *bay'ah* at the beginning of the establishment of an Islamic government. In other words, he granted women the right to vote. This all at a time when women had no rights, including the right to live, and at a time when all individuals had no political rights whatsoever. So it's strange and interesting that, in the twenty-first century, some Muslim countries belittle women and strip them of their rights. Fourteen centuries ago, Prophet Muhammad sought the vote of everyone, so how could we possibly claim today that Islam is incompatible with democracy? Do we want to set ourselves back even further from fourteen centuries ago? Do Islamic governments want to claim that they understand Islam even better than the Prophet Muhammad? In fact, the problem does not lie with Islam as a religion. Rather, for different reasons, some Islamic countries are unwilling to offer an interpretation of Islam that shows that Islam and democracy are in fact compatible. These undemocratic governments are in fact hiding behind Islam as a shield and taking advantage of Islam as a means of justifying their own goals. For this reason, the culture besetting Islamic countries, including their political culture, requires an evolution, so that, with open eyes, they can identify the needs of their society, and, while resorting to the spirit of

Islam, bring back laws that show that Islam is compatible with democratic goals and ideals. The best and most important step that can occur in this cultural evolution is to teach Islam, in its correct sense, to people. Dynamic Islam must be taught to people and people must learn that it is possible to be Muslim and live better at the same time. Muslims should become aware that the key to heaven does not lie in the hands of Islamic governments, that any act by an Islamic government, even in the name of Islam, is not necessarily Islamic. This is only how genuine Islamic movements can rise and replace terrorism.

It is interesting that, in addition to reactionary fundamentalist forces and undemocratic Islamic states, there's another group that resists progressive interpretations of Islam. These are people who seek to identify the wrongful acts of certain individuals and groups as Islam itself, and to show that Islam is equivalent to terrorism. By doing that, they can better endorse the theory of the clash of civilizations and justify the wars in the Middle East. In fact, dynamic Islam and Islam that accepts democracy, and Islam that respects cultural pluralism, and Islam that believes in human rights and democracy, is under attack from two fronts—on one front by fundamentalist reactionary religious groups that try to say that, whatever they do, their acts are Islamic, and on a second front by individuals who are in fact enemies of Islam and seek to show a darker image of Islam in order to justify their wars. And this is the commonality between the enemies of Islam, both its ignorant enemies as well as those who are not ignorant. It is therefore incumbent upon every progressive Islamic thinker, at this critical historical juncture, to reveal the true image of Islam, a religion filled with love and forgiveness, and a religion that is against violence and terrorism. Muslims have, for centuries, lived and worked peacefully and closely with followers of other faiths and religions—Buddhists, Confucianists, Christians, and Jews. Truly, it is possible to live peacefully together, regardless of any creed or belief that we belong to, by respecting those beliefs. Followers of different cultures, while retaining their specific characteristics, can seek their commonalities, and accordingly make laws that will be uniform for everyone and will help improve everyone's life simultaneously. Democracy and human rights are the common requirement of all human societies. Every culture and religion respects everyone who respects the life opportunity and the human dignity of others. Every creed and belief believes that it is unacceptable to resort to terrorism, violence, torture, and to demean human dignity. Those who resort to arguments such as cultural relativism to disregard democratic and human rights values are in fact tyrannical reactionaries, who seek to cover their dictatorial faces by resorting to acts of violence and aggression against their own people, in the name of national or religious culture.

Regretfully, today the world has another reason to fight human rights, and that is in the name of the fight against terrorism. There's of course no doubt that terror and violence are unacceptable in any society, and fighting terrorism and violence therefore thus constitute a legitimate act. However, fighting terrorism should not turn into a tool for silencing people and dissident voices. Unfortunately, doing so and fighting human rights in the name of fighting

terrorism, but disregarding human rights values, has reached an extent to which the United Nations has been forced to pass a number of resolutions on the subject. There're many examples across the world when we look, but I'd like to refer to a few. In the war against terrorism, people's telephone conversations are listened to and eavesdropped on, an act that is illegal and against the constitution, to an extent where even the American Bar Association has spoken against it. Or, for example, in the United States, if you're searching for research material and books, even in a small local library, your information can be connected via computer to Home Security, who can then follow and persecute you for the kind of books that you choose to read. If you recall, in the beginning, I did say that undemocratic Islamic states do not have the right to use the name of Islam to oppress their people. Radical Islamic groups do not have the right to touch on the religious sentiments of the people to take advantage of it and convince their followers to resort to acts of violence. By the same token, Western countries, including and especially the United States, do not have the right to take advantage of the name of democracy and human rights and use it as a justification to militarily attack other countries. It is only through democracy that one can materialize human rights, and, therefore, no country has the right to attack another state or country in the name of human rights and democracy. Human rights and democracy cannot be granted to a nation through cluster bombs. This is exactly how some groups choose to take advantage of democracy and human rights.

Now that we speak of democracy, I'd like to tell you of my definition of democracy. We all know that democracy means the majority rule. But a majority that comes to power through free elections still does not have the right to rule in whatever manner it chooses. They cannot disallow a minority to speak their voices, resorting to ideological beliefs that they have. For example, in socialist countries like China, this is what happens. For a majority that reaches power does not have the right to take advantage of the name of Islam, under the pretext of Islam, to oppress half of society, that is to say, women, an act that happens in many Islamic countries today. These examples show that a majority that comes to power does not have the right to carry out its will in whatever manner it chooses. Democracy has a framework that must be respected. Even when a majority elected government goes beyond this framework, its acts are no longer legitimate, because in fact it has moved away from democracy. Let's not forget that many governments, including many dictators, gained power in the beginning through a majority vote, such as Hitler himself. But since they walk beyond the framework for democracy, they were no longer democratic governments.

But what is this framework of democracy that I refer to? This framework is human rights laws and principles. That is to say, a majority that gains power through votes has the right to govern only by observing human rights values and principles. It is only when democracy and human rights are combined together to govern that society can move toward peace. When we speak of human rights, we know that it has many different dimensions. One of the

dimensions of human rights, which is unfortunately most often neglected, is the provision of welfare to the people of society, in accordance with the wealth of society. Therefore, the widening gap between the rich and the poor is one example of a violation of human rights. There are many countries in which the gap between rich and poor is enormous. The poor are patient and bear the brunt; nevertheless, this is a violation of human rights. I can refer to India as one example or to Iran. The big gap between the rich and poor is one example of a human rights violation. National resources should be used for public benefits. Therefore, countries that have enormous military budgets are violating human rights. There are few countries that either don't have an army or have a very low military budget. Regretfully, most countries in the world have very heavy military budgets. Their military budget exceeds the combined budget that they choose to allocate to health and education in their countries. That means that the money that has to be spent to improve the health and education of people is spent on arms, arms that will be used to destroy the lives of people. It seems, unfortunately, that there is a deadly arms race among countries, a fact that has endangered world peace today.

To justify warfare, politicians take advantage of the religious culture and sentiments of their people. It is therefore the duty of people and every individual to shed light on the commonalities of religions and belief systems, and, therefore, take away the excuse from governments to resort to warfare in order to advance their own interests and violate human rights. One place that can be very helpful in this respect are the universities. Having religious studies, and especially comparative religious programs and studies, can help raise such awareness among people. I'd like to therefore extend my gratitude once again and to congratulate the organizers and sponsors of this congress, including McGill University, for the initiative they have taken. I pray for lasting peace for your beautiful city and for the entire world. Thank you for your patience, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you again.

Questions and Answers

Question: Speaking about the role of human rights charters and legislation as the framework for democracy, for many people who have strong religious convictions, human rights charters and legislation seem to be usurping the role of religious doctrines and traditions, in terms of acting as the framework for the state in a democracy. Can you help us understand the relationship between religious beliefs and democracy, and human rights legislation and religious beliefs and traditions? What should prevail? (Which of them enjoys) your confidence? What has ultimate authority in the framework for democracy—Human rights legislation or religious doctrines? Thank you.

Answer: There's no doubt that the priority is with human rights principles. Because if we base things on traditions, the sentiments, and especially religious and belief sentiments of people, it can be taken advantage of. Governments will

choose to interpret such traditions in a manner that serves their interests and purposes. But if we accept and choose human rights, it tells us what the principles are with full clarity. At the same time, one should realize the fact that human rights are compatible with any religion and belief system and creed. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted, the followers of all major belief systems and faiths were invited to give their input. Human rights is in fact the essence of different belief systems and religions. Do you know of any religion that would endorse killings, murders, belittlement of human dignity, and terror and violence? Do you know of any religion that would take away the rights of a group of people only because of their color or because of their beliefs? Therefore, human rights is the essence of religions and world civilizations. It is not at all incompatible with religious traditions. It is only undemocratic governments that make such a claim so that they can interpret religious traditions in a way that serves their own goals.

Question: To be consistent with what you just said, human rights should prevail on any religion, or, another way to say it would be that, every religion should respect human rights. And to be consistent with that, do you think that we should, or the United Nations should, ask every religious leader to have their own religious writings be censored to make sure that any sentence that promotes violence against women or homosexuals, or violence against any other people from any other religion, should be removed from the religious books?

Answer: It is in practice impossible for the United Nations to force religious leaders to censor their religious texts and teachings. But what would work is that (organizations of) human rights address governments. When human rights are violated, it is governments that are held accountable. If a country legislates a new law, for example, that endorses discrimination against a certain ethnic or religious group, then that is an act of a violation of human rights. And then the government can be condemned. If the government happens to be a member of the International Criminal Court, politicians from that state can also be held accountable by the ICC. Therefore, the relationship of the United Nations is with governments who must legislate and change bad laws, not with religious leaders.

Question: Thank you, Dr. Ebadi, for your book *Iran Awakening*, and for your amazing courage. In many countries, human rights are not extended to gay and lesbian people. My question is, what's the role for international movements like the gay movement, who want to try to impact a country's laws where, for instance, gays and lesbians are regularly executed. How can the national democracy of a country be respected, while at the same time international organizations try to pressure a country to stop the executions? Boycotts usually hurt the poor or others most. But is there a place for boycotts or other movements to try to change national laws?

Answer: The punishment or the execution of gays and lesbians is an act of human rights violation. So if, by law, a government endorses that, and in some

countries this is law, including in some Islamic countries, then the governments have violated human rights. And therefore one has the opportunity to report such acts of violation of human rights, these punishments and executions, to human rights commissions and the international fora that see to these acts. Therefore, gay and lesbian movements should collect the exact figures for the number of individuals who have been persecuted for being gay and lesbian, and, with name and the date of the act of persecution, give a report to international organizations.

Question: Dr. Shirin Ebadi, I congratulate you on your wonderfully inspiring and frank talk, and nations around the world must listen to it. There is, however, a small element that you mentioned in your speech and I would like you to clarify on that point. You mentioned something regarding the enemies of Islam. I'm just wondering, are there such people and how do you conceptualize them, and what is their real intent?

Answer: I believe the enemies of Islam belong to two groups. Their first group is Muslim reactionaries who misinterpret Islam, who hide behind the shield of Islam and justify their oppression in the name of Islam. On the surface, they're Muslims, but in reality, they're the enemy of genuine Islam and dynamic Islam. And the other are groups that, for political interests, choose to, again, take advantage of the name of Islam and represent Islam as a religion that endorses violence and terrorism. They try to say the wrongful deeds and actions of a group of individuals or small group of Muslims is Islam itself. If a group, for example, like al-Qaeda, resorts to terror and violence, they'll say, "You see, this is what Islam is about." By representing a darker image of Islam, they try to justify the wars in the Middle East. I want to add here that, like any other religion, Islam can have different interpretations. You can see, in the West itself, one church endorses the marriage of homosexuals whereas the other one refutes it, whereas both are Christians. Even political ideologies have different interpretations. China was not being run the same way the former Soviet Union was. Was there no difference, for example, between Cuba and Albania? It's the same with Islam. The fact that women and humans rights have different status in different Islamic countries shows that Islam can have different interpretations. You can see, in a country like Saudi Arabia, women can't even drive, let alone have social and political rights. But in other countries, such as Indonesia or Pakistan or Bangladesh, they've had women prime ministers and presidents from many years back. Or, the punishment of stoning or execution is accepted by law in country like Iran and Saudi Arabia, but in other Islamic countries they've been banned. So what Islamic intellectuals are calling for is a correct interpretation of Islam which is compatible with the needs of our time and age.

[Madam Shirin Ebadi commenced her talk after releasing a document for discussion in the academic and faith communities entitled: A Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions. *What follows is the text of the declaration.]*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions

Whereas human beings are led to affirm that there is more to life than life itself by inspiration human and divine;

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948 bases itself on the former;

Whereas any exclusion of the world's religions as positive resources for human rights is obnoxious to the evidence of daily life;

Whereas the various communities constituting the peoples of the world must exchange not only ideas but also ideals;

Whereas religions ideally urge human beings to live in a just society and not just in any society;

Whereas one must not idealize the actual but strive to realize the ideal;

Whereas not to compensate victims of imperialism, racism, casteism and sexism is itself imperialist, racist, casteist and sexist;

Whereas rights are independent of duties in their protection but integrally related to them in conception and execution;

Whereas human rights are intended to secure peace, freedom, equality and justice—and to mitigate departures therefrom—when these come in conflict or the rights themselves;

Now, therefore, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Faculty of Religious Studies, at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

The signatories to this *Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions,* as legatees of the religious heritage of humanity do hereby propose the following as the common standard of achievement for the followers of all religions or none, on the 10th day of December, 1998, as all people are brothers and sisters on the face of the earth.

ARTICLE 1

All human beings have the right to be treated as human beings and have the duty to treat everyone as a human being.

ARTICLE 2

Everyone has the right to freedom from violence, in any of its forms, individual or collective; whether based on race, religion, gender, caste or class, or arising from any other cause.

ARTICLE 3

(1) Everyone has the right to food.
(2) Everyone has the right to life, longevity and liveability and the right to food, clothing and shelter to sustain them.
(3) Everyone has the duty to support and sustain life, longevity and liveability of all.

ARTICLE 4

(1) No one shall be subjected to slavery or servitude, forced labour, bonded labour or child labour. Slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all its forms.
(2) No one shall subject anyone to slavery or servitude in any of its forms.

ARTICLE 5

(1) No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, inflicted either physically or mentally, whether on secular or religious grounds, inside the home or outside it.
(2) No one shall subject anybody to such treatment.

ARTICLE 6

(1) Everyone has a right to recognition everywhere as a person before law; and by everyone everywhere as a human being deserving humane treatment, even when law and order has broken down.
(2) Everyone has the duty to treat everyone else as a human being both in the eyes of law and one's own.

ARTICLE 7

All are equal before law and entitled to equal protection before law without any discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste, class, sex and sexual orientation. It is the right of everyone to be so treated and the duty of everyone to so treat others.

ARTICLE 8

Everybody has the duty to prevent the perpetuation of historical, social, economic, cultural and other wrongs.

ARTICLE 9

(1) No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile by the state or by anyone else. The attempt to proselytize against the will of the

person shall amount to arbitrary detention, so also the detention, against their will, of teenage children by the parents, and among spouses.
(2) It is the duty of everyone to secure everyone's liberty.

ARTICLE 10

Everybody has the right to public trial in the face of criminal charges and it is the duty of the state to ensure it. Everyone who cannot afford a lawyer must be provided one by the state.

ARTICLE 11

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty.

ARTICLE 12

(1) Everyone has the right to privacy. This right includes the right not to be subjected to arbitrary interference with one's privacy; of one's own, or of one's family, home or correspondence.
(2) Everyone has the right to one's good name.
(3) It is the duty of everyone to protect the privacy and reputation of everyone else.
(4) Everyone has the right not to have one's religion denigrated in the media or the academia.
(5) It is the duty of the follower of every religion to ensure that no religion is denigrated in the media or the academia.

ARTICLE 13

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence anywhere in the world.
(2) Everyone has the duty to abide by the laws and regulations applicable in that part of the world.

ARTICLE 14

Everyone has the right to seek and secure asylum in any country from any form of persecution, religious or otherwise, and the right not to be deported. It is the duty of every country to provide such asylum.

ARTICLE 15

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality;
(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of one's nationality nor denied the right to change one's nationality.

(3) Everyone has the duty to promote the emergence of a global constitutional order.

ARTICLE 16

(1) Everyone has the right to marriage.
(2) Members of a family have the right to retain and practice their own religion or beliefs.
(3) Everyone has the right to raise a family.
(4) Everybody has the right to renounce the world and join a monastery, provided that one shall do so after making adequate arrangement for one's dependents.
(5) Marriage and monasticism are two of the most successful institutional innovations of humanity and are entitled to protection by the society and the state.
(6) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. It is the duty of everyone to extend special consideration to mothers and children.
(7) Everyone shall promote the outlook that the entire world constitutes an extended family.

ARTICLE 17

(1) Everybody has the right to own property, alone as well as in association with others. An association also has a similar right to own property.
(2) Everyone has a right not to be deprived of property arbitrarily. It is the duty of everyone not to deprive others of their property arbitrarily. Property shall be understood to mean material as well as intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual property.
(3) Everyone has the duty not to deprive anyone of their property or appropriate it in an unauthorized manner.

ARTICLE 18

(1) There shall be no compulsion in religion. It is a matter of choice.
(2) Everyone has the right to retain one's religion and to change one's religion.
(3) Everyone has the duty to promote peace and tolerance among different religions and ideologies.

ARTICLE 19

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, where the term expression includes the language one speaks, the food one eats;

the clothes one wears; the religion one practices and professes, provided that one conforms generally to the accustomed rules of decorum recognized in the neighbourhood.
(2) It is the duty of everyone to ensure that everyone enjoys such freedom.
(3) Children have the right to express themselves freely in all matters affecting the child, to which it is the duty of their caretakers to give due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

ARTICLE 20

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of assembly and association, and the duty to do so peacefully.
(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association, or to leave one without due process.

ARTICLE 21

(1) Everybody over the age of eighteen has the right to vote, to elect or be elected and thus to take part in the government or governance of the country, directly or indirectly.
(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in one's country and the duty to provide such access.
(3) It is the duty of everyone to participate in the political process.

ARTICLE 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has a right to social security and a duty to contribute to it.

ARTICLE 23

(1) Everyone has the right to same pay for same work and a duty to offer same pay for same work.
(2) Everyone has the right for just remuneration for one's work and the duty to justly recompense for work done.
(3) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of one's interests.
(4) Everyone has the right not to join a trade union.

ARTICLE 24

(1) Everyone has the right to work and to rest, including the right to support while seeking work and the right to periodic holidays with pay.
(2) The right to rest extends to the earth.

ARTICLE 25

(1) Everyone has the right to health and to universal medical insurance. It is the duty of the state or society to provide it.
(2) Every child has the right to a childhood free from violence and it is the duty of the parents to provide it.

ARTICLE 26

Everyone has the right to free education and the right to equality of opportunity for any form of education involving restricted enrollment.

ARTICLE 27

(1) Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community and the right to freely contribute to it.
(2) Everyone has the right to share scientific advances and its benefits and the duty to disseminate them, and wherever possible to contribute to such advances.
(3) Everyone has the right to the protection of their cultural heritage. It is the duty of everyone to protect and enrich everyone's heritage, including one's own.

ARTICLE 28

Everyone has the right to socio-economic and political order at a global, national, regional and local level which enables the realization of social, political, economic, racial and gender justice and the duty to give precedence to universal, national, regional and local interests in that order.

ARTICLE 29

(1) One is duty-bound, when asserting one's rights, to take the rights of other human beings; of past, present and future generations, the rights of humanity, and the rights of nature and the earth into account.
(2) One is duty-bound, when asserting one's rights, to prefer non-violence over violence.

ARTICLE 30

(1) Everyone has the right to require the formation of a supervisory committee within one's community, defined religiously or otherwise, to monitor the implementation of the articles of this Declaration; and to serve on it and present one's case before such a committee.
(2) It is everyone's duty to ensure that such a committee satisfactorily supervises the implementation of these articles.

6

Women in World Religions: Discrimination, Liberation, and Backlash

Rosemary Radford Ruether

In this talk on women in world religions, I will attempt some comparisons of the treatment of women in seven major traditions of world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in their classical periods of development. I will then discuss how women's status was modernized in these world religions, and how this process of modernization has generated fundamentalist backlash in several of these traditions. Obviously, in such a 40-minute presentation, it is impossible to mention all the historical nuances that would be necessary for a longer study of these issues. One is forced to make broad generalizations.

All of these seven traditions reflect patrilineal, patriarchal patterns of their societies and enshrine somewhat comparable expressions of discrimination against women. This is in contrast to Shamanist traditions that preexisted these patriarchal religions and where women's autonomy and leadership is more highly valued. Daoism, often listed among the world religions, carries on much of the ancient Chinese Shaman traditions, and significantly allows a larger place for female leadership and a positive view of the feminine than the more patriarchal world religions I will discuss in this talk.

Comparative Patterns in World Religions

I will compare these seven world religions in terms of six major themes: (1) male and female in cosmic order, and good and evil; (2) purity and impurity; (3) education, teaching, and religious leadership; (4) asceticism and monasticism; (5) marriage, divorce and widowhood; (6) dress, body, and segregation.

Male and Female in Cosmic Order; Good and Evil

Among world religions, Christianity developed one of the most severe woman-blaming views for the advent of evil. According to the Augustinian tradition that shaped western Christianity, men and women were created with souls equally capable of spiritual life, but the woman was created subordinate to man in the original order of creation. The woman then revolted against this subordination in the primeval garden causing the expulsion of humanity from paradise and the advent of evil in the world. In order to redeem herself, the woman must subordinate herself to male authority even to the point of coercion and abuse. Although women of spiritual merit may be equal in heaven, this redemptive transformation entails acceptance of strict subordination on earth.[1]

Christianity also absorbed a Greek dualistic ontological hierarchy of the spiritual over the material, mind over body and linked the body with physical passions and sin. Women by nature are seen as linked to the body and more prone to bodily passions. For Augustine, women's "natural" subordination is tied to this hierarchy of mind over body, the male representing the mind and the female the body.

Judaism also carries the story of woman's creation from the side or "rib" of Adam, her primacy in disobedience to God and expulsion from paradise. But because Judaism does not have a doctrine of the Fall, this story does not have the same theological consequences as in Christianity. The Quran has only the story of man and woman's creation at the same time, lacking the Adam's rib story and woman blaming for sin, although this story comes into Islam through later commentary influenced by Christianity. Islam also lacks the idea of the Fall. Both Judaism and Islam see men and women as created for different roles, men for public service and headship of the family and women for domestic duties, but these are not linked to ontological hierarchy of mind over body as in classical Christianity.

In Hinduism, women are also linked with the material world of appearances and are seen as less capable of spiritual liberation. This is connected with concepts of karma and *samsara* (the cycle of rebirth). Women's lesser capacity for liberation means they are destined to continue in the cycle of rebirth. Being born a woman is itself seen as caused by previous sin, resulting in being born as a female. These ideas also come into Jainism and Buddhism through the influence of Hinduism, but they are contested in these two traditions.

In Jainism two religious orders developed, the Digambaras who practice nudity and the Shevetambaras, who are white-clad. The Digambaras do not admit women to monastic life, claiming women are impure and sensual, incapable of the spiritual renunciation, while the Shevetambaras admit women and see them as having the same capacities as men. In Buddhism, there are traditions that claim that women cannot become a Buddha because of her sensual female body seen as threatening to the celibate life of male monks, while other traditions insist that male or female bodiliness is an illusory difference and a woman can equally attain spiritual liberation.[2]

In Confucianism, the cosmos is seen as grounded in a cosmic energy, Ch'i, which works through an interplay of vital forces, yin and yang, linked to male and female. Yin and yang are not dualistic in the same way as mind and body in Western philosophical thought. Rather they are seen as complementary and interpenetrating, each vitally necessary to the other. In Daoism, the yin or female force is even seen as more primary, grounding the male yang. However in Confucianism, the yin-yang complementary forces, became linked with a hierarchical concept of society, the outer public world and the inner domestic world. Since woman is strictly confined to the domestic world, and is the underside of all of the social relations of authority and obedience, this also shaped the yin-yang interaction as hierarchical. Yin-Yang as passive to active is linked to subordination and dominance in social relations.[3]

Purity and Impurity

The notion of woman's ontological inferiority is related to the idea of woman's impurity or ritual pollution in several traditions. This is particularly true in Hinduism, where the hierarchy of caste is linked to the hierarchy of purity and pollution. The lowest caste, the Sudras, and the outcastes or untouchables, are assigned the dirty work that is ritually polluting. Women, through their bodily activities of menstruation and childbirth and their work in food preparation and cleanup, are linked to ritual impurity, and thus equated to the Sudras, the ritually impure caste.

Judaism also has a strong tradition of woman's ritual impurity through her bodily functions of menstruation and childbirth. This deeply affects daily life. A woman must segregate herself from her husband and male relatives for part of each month. The dichotomy of purity and impurity is correlated with the sacred and the profane. In temple Judaism, this meant that women were forbidden to approach the Holy of Holies and confined to the outer court. Women's impurity is compared to the impurity of the profane gentile world. In the separations of the pure and the impure, woman falls on the impure side of the separations by which men keep themselves pure and holy to come into the presence of God. They are, as Jewish feminist, Judith Plaskow, has said, the "gentile within."[4]

In New Testament Christianity, this tradition of purity and impurity, correlated with the separations of Jew-gentile and male-female, pure and impure foods, is explicit rejected. In the Quran, the notion of women's impurity is ignored. But in both Christianity and Islam, ideas of woman's impurity come back in through popular culture, particularly affecting women's public religious participation. Women are told to exclude themselves from church or mosque when menstruating. Christianity developed a rite of purification for women after childbirth.

Even in modern Protestantism such ideas sometime reenter through popular culture. Thus, when I taught at Gurukul Lutheran Theological Seminary in Madras a few years ago I was surprised to be told by a woman seminarian that her pastor told her women may not enter the church while menstruating. Both

the notions of women's ritual impurity in Hindu-influenced culture, plus the presence of such ideas in Hebrew Scripture, apparently caused this pastor to appropriate these traditions into Christian practice in India.

Education and Religious Leadership

Many world religions traditionally excluded women from religious education or at least the higher level of education. This also excluded women from the religious leadership that depended on such education. In Judaism, women were excluded from study of religious texts and directed to take care of the material side of life in order to free the male to study. This also excluded women from the rabbinate which depended on a high level of achievement in such study. Islam did not exclude women from private study, but women are not admitted to the role of public teacher or Imam.

Christianity also did not exclude women from private study, but women are forbidden to engage in public teaching. This also meant that women's writings were less likely to be preserved, since the fruits of women's intellectual life were not seen as part of the public teaching tradition. The exclusion of women from ordination in Christianity is also linked with the idea that the sacramental priesthood represents Christ. Classical Christianity taught that women's lack of full humanity meant that she could not represent Christ and that Christ had to be a male to represent the fullness of humanity.[5]

In Hinduism, it is the Brahman caste that study the sacred texts and perform the rituals dependent on such knowledge. Women of Brahman caste are excluded from this study and are linked with ignorance and lack of capacity for knowledge. In Confucianism also women are excluded from the study that leads to public service as a Confucian scholar. The Jain tradition limited the right of nuns to study, forbidding them access to certain texts.[6] Buddhism does not restrict study by nuns, but has put many impediments in the way of women achieving authority as a teacher. Thus although traditions exist of women's learning, there are few existing texts identified as authored by women.[7]

Asceticism and Women Religious

Asceticism created a new layer of spiritual practice, based on rejecting marriage and family for renunciate life. In the ascetic dimension of religion, there arises a debate whether women are capable of renunciate life and are to be admitted to monastic life. Neither Judaism, Islam, nor Confucianism value sexual renunciation, focusing religion on family life, so this issue does not arise, although Judaism apparently had a brief development of celibate religious communities in the first century. Hinduism generally excludes women from renunciate life and the study that is necessary for it, although female Bhakta who renounce marriage for devotion to a particular god do develop.

Buddhism and Jainism admit women to monastic life, but put severe constrains on them, insisting that even the oldest and most learned nun must subordinate herself to the youngest monk. Thus, female monastic are

marginalized, denied authority, and often lack the same economic resources as monks. Offerings to nuns by the laity are seen as garnering less merit than offerings to monks.

Christianity valued celibate life and promoted female monastic communities, although attempting to put them under male church authority, affording them less mobility and education than males. In medieval Christianity, learned women's monastic communities developed, often playing the key role of education for women in the society. With libraries and scriptorium, women's religious communities have been key to the preservation of women's mystical and religious writings. In modern times, the struggle to improve nuns' education and to afford them wider public ministries has been areas of conflict between Christian women's communities and the male ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood

In all world religions regulating marriage, divorce and widowhood have been key functions of religion, linked to supporting the patriarchal family. Hebrew religion in patriarchal times allowed polygamy, but this died out as Judaism developed. Men have the priority in initiating divorce, and this continues to cause great difficulty to Orthodox Jews when the husband is absent, but not certified as dead or refuses to give a wife a divorce. This leaves many Orthodox Jewish women in a limbo, unable to remarry.

Christianity preferred celibacy to marriage and rejected polygamy. Remarriage of widows or widowers was discouraged. Marriage was banned between cousins to the seventh degree of kinship, and divorce was not allowed.[8] Islam allowed a man four wives, if he could treat them all equally, a Quranic teaching which has been used to insist that a male should have only one wife, since no man could treat multiple wives equally. Traditionally, Islam also allowed a man to divorce his wife simply by announcing three times that he divorced her.

Hinduism and Confucianism prefer the one legal wife, although concubines and secondary wives maintained by a husband were not criticized. Moreover, both of these traditions developed practices of child marriage in order to assure that the bride would be a virgin. Males have the prerogative in divorce. Both Hinduism and Confucianism discourage remarriage of widows. This most severely affected the Hindu widow who was faced with the choice of burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband or becoming an impoverished beggar on the margins of family life. How well women were able to live as widows or divorced women depended on women's rights to inherit and maintain control of property from their families and husbands, rights which most patriarchal religions have restricted.

Separation, Veiling and the Female Body

Much of the discourse about women and religion in recent decades has centered on the insistence of modern Islamists on women's complete body covering, including in some cases covering of the face. This is seen as evidence of

the extreme subordination of women in Islam, in contrast to greater freedom of western Christian and Jewish women. But this Islam-blaming for women's subordination, focused on veiling, is ahistorical. The issue of women's veiling needs to be put in the context of practices in many cultures of restricting women to the household, insistence on full body covering and accompaniment when women leave the protected domestic space. Such separation of women has applied mostly to upper class women, with peasant women much freer to move around in the outside world, although also seen as disreputable because of this greater freedom.

Hinduism sought to restrict female activities, particularly of upper caste women, to the domestic sphere. This separation is believed to have become more severe under the influence of Islam in India after 1200 C.E. Confucianism also sought to restrict the upper class women to the domestic space and forbid women presence in the public world. The practice of foot-binding in Chinese culture had the obvious effect of severely restricting female mobility, confining them to a sedentary life within the home. Although it began for elite women, it came to be identified with respectable and valued women of affluent men who could afford such restrictions of their wife's work. Peasant women who must work in the fields could not afford such a luxury, but this also meant that women with "natural" feet were seen as crude and low class.

Veiling of women was not unknown in Christianity and Judaism. In the New Testament, uncovered hair is connected with women's sensuality and sinfulness which causes temptation in men and angels. Thus, women are particularly enjoined to wear a veil in church. This idea continued into modern times in practices of women wearing a veil or hat in church. In Judaism, uncovered hair was seen as seductive, an indication of a "loose" woman. The respectable women should wear a veil and full body covering without jewelry or attractive clothing in public. Orthodox Judaism developed the custom of demanding that the wife shave her head and wear a wig, since uncovered hair was seen as dangerously sensual. This continues among ultra-Orthodox women today, while mainline Orthodox women generally wear some kind of hat or scarf to cover her hair in public.

Islam was influenced by these customs in Judaism and Christianity. It developed an insistence on women remaining primarily in the domestic space and wearing a veil in public, although again this was primarily a custom for upper class women, with peasant women who had to work in the fields less likely to wear a head covering. The contemporary Islamist insistence on complete body and head covering, including the face, and restriction of any contact with males outside the family, has primarily developed in the context of a modern Islamist fundamentalism that is shaped by reaction to what is perceived as Western colonialism and corruption of family morals.

Modernization and Backlash

To explain this fixation on female veiling and separation in contemporary Islamism, one needs to turn to the issue of modernization of women's status

from the mid-nineteenth century to the present and the way in which certain processes of modernizing women's status in the context of secularism and colonialism have lent themselves to antifeminism backlash in several world religions.

Women in the United States and England began to agitate for women's rights from the mid-nineteenth century. They sought higher education, access to valued male professions, such as medicine and law, and legal civil status, including the vote, property rights, and the possibility of political office. From the 1880s to 1930s, there was some success in winning more equal legal status with men in these societies.

Rights for women were argued on two different grounds. For Christian feminists in the United States, depatriarchalization of American society reflected their views of true Christianity. Women were said to have been created equal by God and affirmed in this equality by Christ. Patriarchy was seen as a sinful deviation from God's true intentions. This view in original equality was particularly cultivated by Quaker feminists such as Angelina Grimké Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, important in the nineteenth-century feminist movement.[9] But most of the changed status of women in America and Britain coincided with secularization and the loss of influence of the churches over society, with the clerical class mostly resisting rights for women. The hierarchy of the Catholic church in the United States and Europe generally rejected women's suffrage in the 1920s.

This period of amelioration of women's status corresponded with the high point of British imperialism. Britain forged an empire on which the "sun never set" from Egypt to India and Burma. The British colonial leaders established a discourse about the favorable treatment of women in western societies as evidence for the superiority of western civilization. This colonial discourse about women was used both to establish the inferiority of Asian cultures and religions, especially Hinduism and Islam, and to justify British right to rule, based on its "uplift" to women in the Middle Eastern and Asian world. Missionary men and women also adopted versions of this discourse on women, positioning indigenous women as oppressed by Islam, Hinduism, and other Asian religions. Christian conversion was promoted as uplifting women.[10]

This kind of discourse about western civilization as liberating women has returned today as a tool against the Islamic world. For example, when President Bush invaded Afghanistan in 2002, one of his arguments to justify the invasion was the oppression of Afghani women by the Taliban, even though the American government had shown no concern about the oppression of Afghani women earlier when they were allies whom the Americans helped put into power. The superiority of American culture was touted as democratic and liberating by presenting the Americans as liberating women, promoting their education and political rights.

This colonial discourse about women created two kinds of reactions on the part of men of the colonized societies. Indigenous women were seldom consulted by either side and only with difficulty began to articulate their own voice

in this conflict. These two responses I will call "militant secular nationalism" and "militant anti-western religious fundamentalism."

The first response predominated in the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. The second response has grown in the last thirty-five years as secular nationalist governments, established by anticolonial liberation movements, have failed to establish just societies freed from western neocolonialism.

Some national liberation movements linked themselves with Marxism, such as in the China and Vietnam. Religions, whether Confucian, Buddhist, or Christian, were discredited as reactionary and superstitious vestiges of a backward era, to be overcome by a socialist society that would bring both freedom from western colonialism and an equalitarian and just society for all. The equality of women was seen as an integral part of this just society. Such male socialist feminism discouraged independent feminist movements, seen as "bourgeois western" feminism, since socialism would take care of assuring women's equality in society.

India and the Islamic world also sought liberation from Western colonialism, promoting secular democratic societies, rather than a socialism which aroused western anticommunist interventions. Modernization of women's status, the vote, equal education, inclusion in professions, removal of oppressive restrictions and practices, such as foot-binding in China, widow burning and child marriage in India, or purdah and the veil in Islamic countries, were seen as part of this secular modernization.

The failure of many of these secular liberal or socialist societies to establish real justice for the majority and to free the society from western economic neocolonialism sparked a second anticolonial movement that has focused on religious renewal. Islamism, sometimes called Islamic fundamentalism, has become the strongest version of this second movement, which attacks the corrupt leadership of their own society, and continued western dominance. Religious fundamentalist movements are also found in Hinduism and Confucianism, and right wing or fundamentalist Judaism and Christianity are also on the rise. U.S. right-wing Christianity particularly has been a key ally of the neoconservatives of the Bush administration.

The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 became the key turning point in the advent of this second response to colonialism. Iran had been penetrated by Britain from late nineteenth century who early saw the value of its oil resources. When a newly independent Iran sought to nationalize its oil resources under nationalist leader, Mohammed Mossadegh, he was overthrown by a combination of British and American power in 1953, reestablishing the Shah of Iran as western puppet, who severely repressed internal dissent. The Shah also supported the modernization of women's status.

When the Shah's oppressive rule was overthrown by an Islamic regime in 1979, this took the form of a militant antiwestern policy, and insistence on reestablishing traditional Islamic restrictions on women. The modernization of women's status, symbolized by the adoption of western dress, came to be the concrete expression of the corruption of Muslim societies and values by

western neocolonialism. The vindication of Muslim masculinity against western power thus came to be expressed by a combination of antiwestern militancy and reestablishment of strict control over women.

The psychological connections between control over women in family and society and overthrowing western control over the resources of the society have deep emotional links. The humiliation of Muslim men by the West, which claims to prove its superiority through its liberation of their women, is rebuffed by insisting that such liberation of women is in fact their corruption and the corruption of the whole society, while the purity and divine favor of the society is vindicated by reestablishing traditional gender relations.

Although the historical context is different for a western society, such as the United States, the psychological and cultural dynamics are somewhat similar. In the 1880s, conservative Christians rejected historical critical methods of Biblical interpretation, writing a series of books called "the Fundamentals," from which comes the name Fundamentalism. In the 1920s–50s, conservative Christians lost out politically and culturally to liberal Christians in the seminaries and National Council of Churches and to secularism and pluralism in the larger culture. Such liberal and secular leaders made conservatives feel humiliated and culturally backward on issues such as teaching evolution in the schools.

Since the late 1970s with the Reagan presidency and now that of George W. Bush, right-wing Christianity has made a spectacular political comeback and has sought to assert its cultural agenda in the society, ideally seeking to reestablish their definition of an American Christian state. Attack on abortion and on homosexual marriage have become their key issues. Feminism in general is seen as corrupting society and destroying "family values." Conservative Christians seek to claim to be the true Christian believers, over against secular godlessness. To quote Christian fundamentalist leader Pat Robertson, "Feminism makes women leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."

Progressive Christians are currently busy trying to reestablish a progressive alternative to religious fundamentalism, but progressive Christian men often fail to see how basic sexual and gender politics is to the right-wing Christian agenda. Thus they abandon issues, such as women reproductive rights, as too controversial, while trying to establish their credentials as the authentic Christians through issues of war, poverty, and environmental sustainability.

I suggest that it is religious or theological feminism that is the key alternative to this false dualism between antifeminist religious fundamentalism and liberal secularism. In each of the world religions, most notably Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, significant movements of religious feminism have developed that seek to vindicate the full equality of women as equal partners with men, not by repudiating the religious tradition altogether, but by drawing out its deeper ethical and spiritual values. Thus for Jewish feminist Ellen Umansky, Jewish feminism reaffirms the deeper values of Judaism of women and men's equal dignity, equality, and worth.[11] Christian feminists search the New Testament for

an affirmation of the essentially liberating message of Jesus.[12] Islamic feminists, such as Riffat Hassan, seek to establish the egalitarian message of Mohammed in his social context. She cites the lack of traditions, such as women as created second from Adam's rib, within the Quranic teaching.[13]

Thus, religious feminists in the various world religions seek a renewal of the ethical and spiritual traditions, not the repudiation of religion by secular materialism. It is this renewal of religious and ethical values based on the equal sacred worth of all humans, women as much as men, which is the only answer to the false dichotomy of antiwomen religious fundamentalism, on the one hand, and a secular materialism unconcerned with values of the common good, on the other.

Notes

1. See Rosemary Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 71–77.
2. See Nancy S. Barnes, "Buddhism," in *Women in World Religions,* ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 119–21.
3. Theresa Kelleher, "Confucianism," in *Women in World Religions,* 140.
4. Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 94.
5. This is particularly developed by Thomas Aquinas, under the influence of Aristotelian anthropology: see Ruether, *Women and Redemption,* 94–96.
6. See Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
7. Barnes, *Women in World Religions,* 129–31.
8. For a fuller development of Christian teachings on marriage and divorce, see Rosemary Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 47–59.
9. Ruether, *Women and Redemption,* 160–74.
10. On "colonial feminism," as promoted by colonial leaders and Christian missionaries, see "Women in South and Southeast Asia," in Barbara N. Ramusack, *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 41–43.
11. Ellen Umansky, "Feminism in Judaism," in *Feminism and World Religions,* eds. Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 180.
12. For example, Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1983).
13. Riffat Hassan, "Feminism in Islam," in *Feminism and World Religions,* eds. Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 248–75.

7

Fundamentalism and Interfaith Dialogue

Harvey Cox, Jr.

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." These are the opening words of Charles Dickens' famous novel *A Tale of Two Cities.* The phrase might, however, very well describe the situation of interreligious relations in the world since that terrible day five years ago. It's a time of paradox in the relations of the religious traditions to each other. On the one hand, interreligious dialogue seems to be, and indeed is, flourishing. There are more organizations and conferences and seminars and centers and programs devoted to this topic and these themes than in any previous time in history. They're flowering. However, we also live in a world of dangerous animosity, between and among religious traditions: My colleague, Professor Samuel Huntington warns, that we may be heading for a bloody clash of civilizations between what he designates as Islamic on one side and Judeo-Christian civilizations on the other. Sometimes he calls it the West against the rest. I think he is wrong for a number of reasons, one of which is the "welcome marbling" of religious expressions around the world. We're all mixed in with each other and we're not really any longer centered in any particular civilizational blocks, a very healthy development. Between these two contradictory trends—all these positive things that are going on and this dangerous animosity—we have an explanation for what is going on. It has to do with the fact that, due to immigration, travel, Internet, diaspora of all religions around the world, we are now in each other's faces, we are now each other's neighbors.

So I want to direct my remarks here to three angles that we need to address in a triangle of challenges, and that present themselves to us as we take a step into the future, away from the five years that have passed since

September 11. These all have to do with some tendencies that should not go unnoticed as we proceed with these conversations. The first is the appearance, in the last century, in each of the traditions, of what some refer to as a fundamentalist movement, that is, a strong reaction against interfaith dialogue, which is viewed as a lethal danger to the integrity of the faith. The second is a certain lack of candor in interfaith dialogue, a kind of politeness, a kind of a reticence, that sometimes inadvertently hampers interfaith communication. And the third is a reluctance to speak about or exchange views on the inevitable political dimension of interfaith conversation, the context in which these dialogues go on. Let me speak a little bit about each of these.

I'm concerned about the term "fundamentalist" in particular. It is a word that was coined in the early part of the twentieth century in the United States by those conservative Protestants who believed that biblical scholarship, the theory of evolution, and social gospel were threatening what they took to be the very core of Christianity—the "fundamentals." They issued a number of pamphlets called *The Fundamentals* and began calling themselves "fundamentalists" who would defend these fundamentals—all of them theological fundamentals—the virgin birth, the divine inspiration, and indeed the inerrancy of scriptures, physical resurrection—all theological terms. One of the great mysteries of fundamentalism, in the United States at least, in the last hundred years, has been its transmutation from an explicitly theological religious movement to an almost entirely political movement with strong political influence.

The term fundamentalism, however, very quickly began to be applied elsewhere, to some Muslims and some Jews, all of whom do not like the term to be applied to them. It doesn't help very much in describing radical movements in Hinduism or Buddhism or Shinto. Nevertheless, it is still used to designate those allegedly conservative wings appearing in each of the traditions. I use the word "allegedly" here because I don't believe these are really conservative movements. They are modern movements. They are modern movements that seek to retrieve, very selectively, elements from the past of a tradition, from a text, from a ritual, from a particular period, and then deploy that on certain fronts in the religious and political modern world. They're modern movements that call themselves "conservative."

The two fronts on which fundamentalists in all traditions fight their battles are what might be called the outside front and the inside front. The outside front is against certain tendencies in the modern world, especially in the equality of women and other such things. Yet, at the same time, they embrace eagerly and uncritically certain aspects of modernity, such as advertising, the latest management techniques, communications technologies. I've noticed though, in studying these movements, that they often reserve their most vitriolic comments, their most vigorous opposition not for the outsider, but what they consider to be the fifth column within their own traditions, those who are abandoning or betraying their tradition. So nobody is blamed more vociferously by right-wing Jews than other Jews, or Hindus by other Hindus, or Christians by fundamentalist Christians.

The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, which was founded in Egypt—one of its earliest leaders was Sayyid Qutb, one of the intellectual founders of Muslim renewal—opposed, at the time, most of the movements of the modern world—communism, capitalism, nationalism—in the interest of establishing what they wanted to call an original Islamic *ummah,* informed by Quranic justice and equality. The attacks, however, the criticisms, were focused almost entirely on what they called "pseudo-Muslims," not primarily on the West, but only secondarily, because what they consider to be "pseudo-Muslims" were the ones who were playing into the hands of ruling elites and of colonial powers, and were taking their societies back to what they call *jahiliya,* that is, the period of impiety and chaos and injustice preceding the coming of the Qur'an. The leaders of al-Qaeda have said time and time again that their major enemies are the allegedly Muslim regimes, the West—and only secondarily, the United States in particular—for supporting those regimes which they believe are tyrannizing their own people. This is why they're especially opposed to Saudi Arabia, which rules explicitly in the name of Islam, protecting the sacred sites.

Something similar is happening in Israel. Sometimes the internal confrontation there is depicted as one between secular and religious Israelis, but it really is between two different forms of religion, even though the early founders of Zionism called themselves secular, even agnostic, like Ben-Gurion and others. Still, the language of Zionism is redolent with biblical and religious references. The word Zion itself, for example, is derived from the biblical name for Jerusalem. On the other side is the newly arisen movement of what some people call messianic Zionism, that is, a mixture of Orthodox Judaism and Zionism, the inspiration for which was Rabbi Abraham Kook, sparked especially by the Israeli victory in the 1967 war and inspiring the settler movement, which claims to want to conquer and settle the whole of the Eretz Yisrael. Some people call this the land of fundamentalism.

In the United States we see the same thing. The American religious right condemns Hollywood and activist judges, but they reserve their most potent fusillades for other Christians who disagree with them on all kinds of issues. Notice, however, again, that the main agenda for the religious right in America today is not one of theological content. It is not about biblical inerrancy or the atonement, but what they call traditional values, much of which has only a very peripheral connection with historic Christianity. Remember also that Gandhi was not assassinated by a Muslim, but by a fellow Hindu, and Prime Minister Rabin was not assassinated by a Palestinian Muslim, but by a devoted Zionist Jew, enacting what he believes the Torah instructed him to do. In tradition after tradition, everywhere in the world, we can observe this burgeoning of a fundamentalism wing, which fights both within its own tradition and outside, sometimes with a special venom toward those on the inside.

So where does this leave interfaith dialogue? We have three difficulties to overcome and I want to call them the difficulty of achieving religious candor in interfaith conversation, in stimulating intrafaith, as well as interfaith, communication, and in being willing to include a discussion of the political

dimension within which all of this goes on. I've noticed, in many interfaith meetings, that there's a certain reluctance to bring up questions that might seem to be disruptive, irrelevant, or a threat to the atmosphere of congeniality and collegiality. This often happens. We avoid, either consciously or unconsciously, bringing up things that might offend the other party. We don't want to rock the boat. So, we as Christians, for example, just love to talk about how Jewish Jesus was, what a prominent place he has in the Qur'an, and to be so grateful for that. We should be. Or we muse about how much we need to learn from the lovely Buddhist tolerance or from the generous Hindu inclusivism, as indeed we do have to learn. But at the same time, all of our traditions are enmeshed in political and cultural turmoil. This pattern of tactical avoidance, though it may preserve a certain atmosphere, eventually leads to evading hard questions. It leads to obscuring the involvement, the inconvenient factor, that throughout history, conflicts within and between religious traditions have been suffused with political element, and such detextualized conversations—and
I repeat, not all of the meetings are like this—can therefore lead to a false sense of optimism about the interfaith relationships and the inevitable disillusionment that sets in when they don't seem to work out as we had hoped. For this reason, I warmly commend the planners of this conference for being bold enough to schedule discussions of the Middle East conflict, while we are here in Montreal, and of same-sex marriage. This was courageous and a step certainly in the right direction, which I hope sets an example for other conferences in the future, where we need to do more of that, in a delicate, diplomatic, and frank way.

It's also becoming clear that religious peacemaking, which is a better term than interreligious dialogue—we have an objective in these dialogues, not just to talk to each other, but to make peace among the religions and therefore contribute to peace among the nations and civilizations. We need to do three things. We need to deepen our conversation with other traditions, but also with the other wing of our own traditions, and with the political world in which these two inevitably take place. So I'd like to suggest a couple of changes here, in how we proceed with interreligious conversations. The first is we need to recognize this other wing and to recognize the candor which is needed if we're going to talk with each other, both within and without our traditions, moving away from an exclusive emphasis on cultivating harmony—good feelings—into a phase of honest questioning, especially questioning the toxic ingredients in both our own tradition and in other traditions. And we all have them. They leap out of the pages of the scriptures. They blemish the historical records of each of our faiths. Any reader of the Hebrew scriptures or the Book of Revelation in the New Testament knows about slaying all the Canaanites in order to take back the land, or casting the unbelievers into the sea of fire. The Qur'an, unfortunately, has certain such passages as well. Some people call them the "texts of terror." Now unfortunately a lot of people seem adept at uncovering these texts in other people's scripture, but are less aware of the ones in our own. We all have them. And we have them

in our histories as well. Think about the Crusades, the rivers of blood (unleashed) in Jerusalem by the fourth Crusade, the sacking of Constantinople, in my own tradition. There it is. And to deny it is a kind of false innocence, a kind of disingenuousness, if you will, which in the long run really doesn't contribute to religious peacemaking. We're embarrassed by these elements in our own tradition. We're embarrassed by these texts of terror. But we simply have to uncover them, cope with them, and ask the question of why they often remain moribund for centuries and then suddenly they spark into flames in order to incite violence in other times. How does that happen? It's a hermeneutical question: How are texts interpreted? But it's also a political question: How are texts used, resurrected, deployed for strategic, tactical, political purposes?

I want to suggest that this is an issue that, although we need to struggle with it within our own traditions, we need to help each other. Perhaps a Muslim or a Hindu reading the Christian scriptures can help uncover these texts and gently force us to confront them, and we might even be able to help Muslims or Hindus to confront those elements and ask those questions about their own. It's a risky enterprise. It exposes vulnerabilities on both sides. But I think it's a necessary step to take. If we can move beyond, for example, constantly quoting those lovely exhortations to peacemaking in the Hebrew scriptures—how many times have we heard those during conferences such as this? Or Jesus' recommendation that we love our neighbors. And rarely Jesus' statement that "I come to bring a sword." That isn't often quoted. What do we do with that? But there it is. And to candidly face these, discuss them with each other and recognize we have a common problem, and not just a singular problem in each of the traditions, is something we need to do.

I want to also stress the need for what I call *intra*faith conversation. We must move with more energy to meet, to understand, to appreciate, to argue with those who have circled the wagons within each of our traditions. We don't do enough of that. And unless we do, we face the grim prospect of a future in which open-minded members of each faith devote increasing amounts of time to dialogue and colloquies with other open-minded members of other traditions, and the fundamentalist wings of all of our traditions are left behind. But they're not left behind to wane. They're growing and getting stronger, in many instances, because they are isolated and even more truculent. So we'll end up, paradoxically, with more and deeper divisions than we once had, only running along internal instead of external fault lines. In this case, the interfaith movement would then be defeated by its own apparent success, and no one wants to see that.

I recognize the objection to these suggestions I'm making: "You simply can't talk to these people!" I've heard this a number of times. "You can't talk to fundamentalists. They won't listen. They already have the answer, so why talk?" Well, I want to report here from a personal perspective. In the last ten years, I've been trying very hard to make sure we include intrafaith conversations in our program at Harvard at the Center for the Study of World Religions. We have invited delegations, first from Liberty University, founded by Jerry

Falwell. Faculty and students came, visited us. We visited them. Later we had a similar delegation from Regent University, founded by Pat Robertson, and we found that the people who came thought nobody wanted to hear them, nobody wanted to meet them. They considered themselves to be treated dismissively, as hicks or rednecks, or out of step with the world. And to be invited to have a conversation, even though the conversation might not have produced very much, was a very important step for them, and, I think, also for us. Of course it would be difficult. But this signals, perhaps even more emphatically, the need to do so. It can be done. The discussion we had with the faculty from Regent University was on how to present and advocate religious values in the public realm. We took one of the most controversial subjects. We had a private gathering of five or six faculty members from our faculty, and five or six from theirs. Congenial. Then we had a whole evening of discussion, open to the public, which filled one of the largest halls at the university. It just isn't true that you just can't talk with these people. It's hard. It's difficult. But it isn't impossible, and I'm here to testify to that.

Most Christians I know of who are interested in interfaith dialogue would far prefer to spend an afternoon talking with the Dalai Lama than with Jerry Falwell, and I can well understand how, because I've talked with both of them. I can understand that. But you should not avoid dialogue because it's difficult. It is a reason to try to enter into it. Of course these conversations will be difficult. They're difficult because these are folks in our own tradition who share many of the core beliefs that we share, and therefore it grates on us more when we disagree on what we think is so essential. But this means that both sides try, understandably, to avoid it. We have to make special efforts to include these fellow Muslims, these fellow Christians, these fellow Jews in our conversations. Otherwise, what we're going to see is the deepening of the confrontation, the calumny, the condemnation, and the constant threat of poisonous schism, which will get us nowhere. Sibling rivalry, that say, is one of the nastiest kinds, and here I think we have an illustration of how difficult it is. I remember the first murder recorded in the Bible was a brother who killed his own brother, strikingly over the proper way to sacrifice to the God they both worshipped.

Now the possibility of such *intra*faith dialogue is not as foreboding. And after years of effort, the Divinity School at Harvard has just appointed its first fully tenured and permanent professor of evangelical theology. It'll be a permanent position on our faculty. This is a recognition that the evangelical tradition is not simply something transient. It's there. It's changing. It has its own history. It is an important part of the conversation—the ecumenical conversation and the interfaith conversation. We are hoping, and already finding, that more evangelical and Pentecostal students are enrolling, and I think this is all for the good.

[It is interesting] reaching back into history and finding that, back in the nineteenth century, with evangelicals in the United States, who were the sponsors and champions of abolitionism and the peace movement. William Jennings Bryan, in the early twentieth century, was a great champion of peacemaking in

the world. So there is that tradition to be reclaimed. The president of the National Association of Evangelicals gave a blistering speech in which he condemned the religious right, including the Christian right, in the United States, as an aberration, and a regrettable one at that. Interesting statement. An aberration and a regrettable one. I can't think what an unregrettable aberration would be. He put it pretty strongly. Now if somebody who was the director secretary of the National Council of Churches, of the World Council of Churches had said that, no one would have taken notice. But this was a high official in the National Association of Evangelicals. Something was happening. The Boston Globe reporting his speech, carrying the headline: "Official Chides Christian Right." The following year, Rick Warren, pastor of the huge church in Saddleback, California led efforts by evangelicals and other Christians to organize a movement called Creation Caretakers against Global Warming, and later that same year organized evangelicals to join with Jewish leaders, Catholics, and mainline Protestants to sign a courageous statement opposing torture and publishing the statement in the *New York Times*, just as the administration was dodging the issue and even advocating certain forms of what it euphemistically calls "harsh interrogation" of detainees. So there're a lot of possibilities. We had a wonderful discussion last year with some members of the Gordon-Conwell Faculty, an evangelical seminary in Boston, in which we talked about the impact of the so-called Left Behind novels, which they all deplored as much as we did. These were not universally accepted by evangelicals in the United States. Not at all. It's also true that, in other part of the world, in Latin America in particular, the growth of evangelical Christianity is not replicating the American religious right. If anything, it tends to be a little bit toward the democratic left in its voting records according to surveys of evangelicals in Latin America. And evangelicals there are looking for something equivalent to the social gospel they once condemned. They want it to come from their tradition, and not to be borrowed from somebody else's.

So, maybe at the next session of our World Parliament of Religions, we could have some attention, maybe quite a bit of attention, to intrafaith as well as interfaith dialogue, and we could be more candid and open about the political contours in which these conversations go on.

So here we are, in a paradoxical age, the best of times and the worst of times. We need to face these three directions: toward other faiths, toward those in our own tradition, and to the larger political context. Let's make it the best of times, instead of the worst of times. I think we're making a good start in Montreal this week. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Question: When one is thinking about an example of what might be the best of times, or a good time at least, in interfaith dialogue, a period that comes to mind is the ninth to the twelfth centuries in Andalusia. There we have an instance, it seems to me, of a very rich conversation that begins to develop

initially between Jewish peripatetics and Islamic peripatetics. The religions in some sense can talk to one another in that time precisely because there's a dialogue between religion and philosophy. And the Christians are introduced into this with the translation of the texts of Aristotle from Arabic into Latin, and Thomas Aquinas becomes part of the project invoking Maimonides' *Moreh* in his *Summa Theologica.* And it seems to me that—charging into the Enlightenment—the Protestant tradition, the Anglo-American liberal Protestant tradition, has a lot to answer for for undoing the rich dialogue of religion and philosophy. Places like Oxford and Cambridge and Harvard have contributed mightily to preventing this rich dialogue between religion and philosophy. I think it is one of the great scandals, from my perspective, of what the Enlightenment has accomplished. It may be that the difficulty of interfaith dialogue may owe a great deal to the lack of a dialogue between religion and philosophy. I guess my question is: Do you think the revival of dialogue between religion and philosophy might be the necessary condition for a dialogue among the religions?

Answer: That's a very provocative question. [One thinks of the] period in Andalus, in which southern Spain and northern Morocco were part of a Muslim-ruled province for 400 years or more, in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived together in relative harmony. There was some tension here and there, but it was a remarkable period. Last year, I was part of a travel-study seminar of Harvard alumni and others, studying that period of Andalus. I was very impressed with that, and sorry that it is not given as much attention as it should be. Christian artisans were helping to build the mosques. St. John of the Cross was reading Arabic texts as he composed his *Dark Night of the Soul.* We know there was an awful lot of interaction. One astonishing thing was the sultan of one of the great cities there—the Muslim sultan—appointed the head of the Jewish community as his foreign minister, and in fact sent him over to Constantinople to try to forge an alliance between Andalus and the Byzantine Empire against the other wing of the Muslims in and around Baghdad. But as a matter of fact enlisting the rabbi of the Jewish community seems to be a sign of interfaith vitality.

Now, to the issue of science, I think you're entirely right about that, and I plead guilty. I think what a lot of the big secular research universities have done in the last hundred years is abandon the historical, philosophical task of trying to understand the big picture, which necessarily includes religious dimensions. This wasn't the case with William James and Whitehead—the giants that strode the earth at our Faculty in those days. It has, however, happened, and it is to the expense of philosophy as well as religion. I think it has impoverished both sides. I attribute some of it, indeed, not so much perhaps to Protestant liberalism as to the influence of neo-orthodoxy—Protestant neo-orthodoxy—which didn't think you need philosophy. You had the word of God and that was it. Fortunately the conversation between religion and philosophy is coming back, and it's coming back, interestingly, through two avenues.

One is what you might call the philosophy of public life, public ethics. What do you base public values on? Michael Sandel of the Government Department is a philosopher who's inviting that kind of conversation. The other way it's coming back is, of course, the vexing issues raised by science and technology, which philosophers are beginning to deal with, and which they now believe that some of the ways of thinking about these issues, especially end-of-life issues, have been part of the long tradition of Christian ethical theological discourse. So it is really beginning to happen again, and I think it will make an important contribution, because I do think that the three traditions you mentioned, that were there in Andalus—the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—profiting precisely from having some of the same philosophical texts. They were sitting around the table having each other translate them. They were working together, and that may happen again.

Question: [You spoke about] our own ability to put our own houses in order, especially relations between moderates and extremists. Since you have some expertise on the rights concerning cows, may I ask how one can manage this when it would appear that both groups, the moderates and the extremists, have it as a sacred cow that they are not to dialogue with each other?

Answer: [Let's say], for the moment, the fundamentalist wing, has, at least part of their credo, "you don't talk to those guys." And those of us on the other side have, as part of our credo, "there's no point talking to them." Now, there's a kind of fatalism in this. Somebody has to break the fatalistic chain. Now believe me, it took a lot of time for me to convince my colleagues to invite people from Liberty University or from Regent to come to Harvard. I was criticized for that. "Why give these people a platform? Why do that?" Well, it is important if you are not going to allow the division, the chasm, to deepen and become even more poisonous. Somebody has to break the ice. And I think it's probably more our responsibility to break the ice. At least try. We were surprised by how quickly they responded. I think being invited to a major university probably helped, giving them a chance to be there and talk to other people. I think there are a hundred other universities and church groups that would do the same thing. We have an annual meeting, sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches, which they call an "evangelical-liberal dialogue." We meet once a year, spend the whole day talking about this. The progress can be very slow, but what I want to say here.... Let me repeat a sentence or two from what I just said. These groups...neither of these groups is monolithic. There're changes within the evangelical community. It's growing, it's dispersing, it's changing, it's fragmenting. The old leadership of Robertson, Dobson, and Falwell is being displaced now by a new generation of young leaders. When President Bush went to Calvin College in Michigan last spring, his aides told him this was a good, safe place to go. It was a conservative, Calvinist college, and he would be welcome there. He was welcomed all right. He was welcomed by a huge student demonstration bearing banners saying the war in Iraq doesn't qualify, according to Christian standards, of just war. He was welcomed

by a Faculty petition, signed by a third of the Faculty, that said the same thing. I was told that he was as nice as he could be, but he really blistered his aides when he got back to Washington for not warning him in advance about what to expect. Let us not think of this whole group now as a singular block, with an unmovable creed that they're not going to talk to anybody else. I think we simply have to keep trying.

Question: Just one last thing if I may. Dialogue is fine and is important. But what does one do about violence and terror and apathy, which seem to be equally if not more important than long-term dialogue?

Answer: You have to start by conversing with people. I'm a strong believer in the power of dialogue. I'm still influenced by Martin Buber, whom I read as a college student. I think we just have to keep trying. It's people who don't understand each other, with faulty information about each other, have stereotypes, images, who are willing to engage in violence against each other, and that can be, to some extent, mitigated by face-to-face meeting, even if the meetings are argumentative, even if the meetings are heated. At least you are meeting and you're talking and trying to listen to each other. I think that's better than nothing.

Question: I want to share with you some of my own experience and insight into this thing to see if you could give me another perspective on it. Coming from rural Georgia, where attempting such a thing with people in the community, I have found them dishonest, duplicitous, demeaning of other people, publicly defaming other people's character. I stopped talking with them. That's just a personal thing. The theological perspective, the notion of intrafaith dialogue.... I begin to wonder if we're still within the same faith. And the reason I say that is because when I look at the central claim of the fundamentalist tradition, they do not consider history central to the tradition. To me, they have branched off from Judaism and Christianity as much as Islam did, or Buddhism did out of Hinduism. The core of that position seems to be not Judeo-Christian in the least. And the point is, I'm not looking at ethics and I'm not even looking at this personal stuff, but it's the theological issue that Judaism and Christianity were always historical religions, and when you disregard that, you have vitiated the essence of that tradition.

Answer: That's true, and that's a very serious observation. It is also true, however, that even fundamentalists, if they eschew history, live in history. They live in history. History is changing around them. Regions they live in are changing. There are lots and lots of people in the world who are ex-fundamentalists. I could introduce you to a number of them, who once were but no longer are. And one of the reasons is in order to keep up that kind of a bastion of nonrecognition of your own history or others' history, it takes a lot of energy. It takes a lot of energy to do that and to keep it going, especially if you meet more and more people who don't share exactly your perspective. Notice that the Southern Baptist Convention a couple of months ago wanted to pass a resolution

suggesting that all Southern Baptists should withdraw from any kind of participation in the public school system. And it didn't pass at the meeting. However, the very idea that that could be thought of, and then rejected by the hundreds and hundreds of Southern Baptists who teach in public schools or are principles or administrators, suggests that it's not going to be possible for them to withdraw from certain elements of American religious pluralism. The girlfriend, the boyfriend, the pal down the street, the brother-in-law are not going to be people who agree with this, and the historical and personal interactions are going to go on. So maybe I'm really entirely too optimistic or innocent about this, but I don't think it hurts to try to have a conversation. I'm sorry that you've been impugned and insulted that way. I've had a little of that myself and it's hard to take. It's very hard to take, but it shouldn't turn us around. I can remember the time when—not too many years ago, twenty-five years ago—someone donated some money to the Harvard Divinity School to add a Chair of Roman Catholic theological studies, and some of my friends and colleagues on the Faculty said, "We can't do that! Catholics can't engage in free and open academic research and teaching. They have to do what the Pope tell them. How can we have a Catholic on this Faculty?" Well, that group was voted down, mainly because it was a 2.5 million dollar grant, and we've had some of the finest and most cooperative kinds of Catholic scholars who are now not only teaching Catholic theology but teaching Bible and Church history. So we can't allow the stereotype to continue to inform our perception of other groups, when what we really need, and they need, is the experience of mutual exchange.

Question: I have a very quick question. Would Harvard be prepared to go to Liberty or Regent? Or is it just the other way around?

Answer: We did both. We had an exchange, and I actually gave a lecture at Regent. I was not introduced by President Robertson. But I spoke openly to a large group of students and Faculty and had a wonderful evening talking to them. We plan to do some more of it.

Question: Thanks for inviting other religions to review the scriptures of major religions, at least the Christian traditions and the Jewish traditions. I'm talking for the Hindu traditions. How would you help Hindu traditional scholars or pundits to take a look at the major religious works and make their own observations? If you look back, seventeenth century onwards, the Asian traditions, especially the Indic traditions, boiling down to the Vedic traditions, have been abused, misused, misinterpreted, or whatever you want to call it. And this team, they will have an opportunity to voice itself in the West here. How would you help the traditional scholars of Hinduism to make their views known on the current world religions?

Answer: Fine question. One of my favorite examples of how a text can be read is, of course, the *Bhagavadgîtâ,* which is about war and about the encouragement by Krishna of Arjuna to engage in war. On one level, this can read as a very militaristic and violent text. However, it was the favorite text of Gandhi,

because Gandhi read it as a metaphor of the struggle we all have against the violence within us. He read it as a spiritually informative text. So a lot of the question, I think, is what is technically called a hermeneutical question: How do we read such texts, not just on a scholarly level, but in what kind of historical setting and circumstance are they read? One method for this that we found rather useful and productive is to have scholars from, say, two traditions, say, Hindu and Christian, to come together and read a Jewish text. Or have a Hindu and Jewish scholar come together and read a text which is not theirs, like something from the New Testament. While we do this we have the people for whom that is a primary text listening in, but not necessarily contributing. And they learn something. I think we are now entering an era in which we cannot simply ponder our own texts. We have to ponder each other's texts and do it together with each other, and we'll discover things that we hadn't seen before.

Question: Probably I did not clarify my issue. It is not about hermeneutics. It is about the foundational economics and trends in the publication industry in the academia. That's what I want you to make your observations please.

Answer: Well, you may be right. Maybe we should get another question because we're running out of time.

Question: Dr. Cox, I was fascinated with the idea that Harvard Divinity School has named its first evangelical professor of theology. And you mentioned that right in the context of inviting Regent and Liberty. Should we try to invite someone who has a diametrically opposed theological perspective, to be a permanent part of our Faculty or a permanent part of our group to have that opposing perspective? Or just from time to time to bring someone in and to maintain a particular perspective as a Faculty that believes in this direction or that direction? You see the question?

Answer: I see exactly the question, and I think that would vary from one school to another. Our underlying perspective is we want these major voices in at least the American religious landscape represented by those who are both scholars of that tradition and also, to some extent, practitioners of that tradition. We make no apology for that. That's the most valuable kind of voice we can have, and we want them to be a permanent part of our Faculty conversation among ourselves and with our students. There may be schools in which that would not be relevant, but there are Jesuits schools now that have Muslims on their faculty. There are Jewish schools that have Christian members of the faculty. This is becoming more common and I think it is a good thing. I think somehow maintaining the underlying thematic of a particular school is good, but that underlying thematic can even be strengthened and sharpened with the presence within the school of people with other perspectives.

Question: We have seen right now that, though the world is going toward secularism, but, at the time, theocratic stresses are increasing. But in the whole

conference today, I've not seen much of an example of how the advancement or more growth of the theocratic states actually hampers the well-being of all secular nations all over the world. And I have seen quite a fraction of different lectures by different speakers in today's session, and I have found that they're trying to say that United States is the ultimate enemy of Islam, and this kind of talk is going around. There may be something in this but one thing is not examined at all in any way, that in theocratic countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, how the minorities are treated. [Their proportion] has come down in Bangladesh from 30 percent to 9 percent, in Pakistan from 24 percent to 1 percent. [These facts are never explained.] And also, if everyone thinks that my religion is to spread my religion, whether Islam or Christianity, how can that be at all possible, when my outward motto is to Christianize the world or Islamize the world?

Answer: That's a very dangerous trend you point to, and I think the diminishing of religious minorities in any country, especially ones where their presence has been there for a long time, is a disastrous development and ought to be opposed at every turn. One of the great pleasure I have is the pleasure of teaching. And almost every class I give, teaching young men and women from Islamic countries, they all seem to be intensely interested in comparative religion, other religions, Christianity, Judaism as well as their own. And they're living in a country in which there is religious pluralism and tolerance and they will eventually be going back to leadership positions in their own countries. But I think it's a particularly foreboding development that countries that have had minorities that have been part of the weft and woof of their culture, sometimes for centuries, are making it harder for those minorities to stay there. I think it's a matter that needs all our attention.

Question: Good afternoon, Professor. Cox. Thank you for hearing me. My husband and I run the New Seminary in New York which ordained interfaith ministers, and something has come to our attention in the last couple of months that is particularly disturbing. We have heard that the Religious Right, if you want to call it that, has called interfaith the next anti-Christ. I was wondering if you have heard that and if you could talk about that for a second.

Answer: I have not heard that but I'm not, alas, entirely surprised by it. I think one has to be careful of how we say the Religious Right, as it's called. The Religious Right is also not as monolithic as you might think, and there are different voices within it. But they're very suspicious. That's what I said in my talk. They're very, very suspicious of interfaith dialogue, many of them, and calling it anti-Christ, I guess, is just raising it to the highest caliber. So I wish we could have stopped on a better note than that, but thank you. It shows us we still have a lot of work to do.

Question: If I may...just a minute.... One thing I want to add.... The only words that we've been missing are—and I want to remind us of it in our

teaching—and I'm going to say it in an old Latin expression that I learned when I was four years old. Shall I say it for you?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Ego amo tua. Shall I translate it?

Answer: Yes.

Questioner: I love you.

8

What on Earth Is Evangelism?

Dr. Donald Posterski

In Canada, there is a reticence to actively engage in religious dialogue. We are much more focused on being a pluralistic nation than being a country that incites and invites religious conversation. As I thought about tonight's challenging subject, *What on Earth Is Evangelism?* it seemed to me that the teachings of Jesus and the sacred texts of the New Testament would be a good starting point.

At the end of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, is a parable that for me, has become a paradigm from which to frame my own beliefs, as well as, to offer perspective on how to relate and understand people who have come to different conclusions about life.

> Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell—and great was its fall.
>
> *Matthew 7:24–27 NRSV*

This imagery of building on rock, building on sand, and the storms coming into our lives invites a hermeneutic for mutual understanding. It underscores the message that everyone builds their life out of something. There are in fact no unbelievers, if you please. I sometimes hear people contend that others do not have faith or a belief system. By that, I think they often mean people do not have values or ethics that are like their own. But I would suggest to us that regardless

of who we are, where we live, whatever our socioeconomic or education status is—we all believe. That is to say that whoever we know by name and everyone we have not met and do not know—everyone builds their life out of something.

I spend part of my weeks and months in a year in various parts of the world looking at poverty face to face. Some people live with horrific circumstances, not because they've created those circumstances, but more often, they have inherited them. The greatest predictor for poverty is where you were born and what are the particular circumstances of your family. I was in Ethiopia not very long ago. I talked to a member of the World Vision staff, who told me he was going to have his first child. As I listened to him, I saw the glint in his eye, and I said, "you know, I have five grandchildren." He looked back at me and said, "Most people in my country don't live long enough to enjoy their grandchildren." Everyone believes. Everyone builds. But on the face of this earth, some people have more building materials than others, and that can be extended far beyond the material to the psychological, the giftedness, and the opportunities that those bring.

This parable has also made me sensitive to the fact that everyone faces storms. Sometimes, those storms come out of huge systems. They may be as a result of a tornado or an avalanche or maybe a car accident, when "there is innocence"—and no control but only vulnerability. There is no blame, just pain. Other storms come from bad choices, from addictive behaviors and patterns of self-inflicted destruction. When a person refuses to forgive and harbors anger and grudges, these become storms. But regardless of what we believe, or regardless of whether we've had the benefit of great giftedness or affluence, everyone faces storms. There is no escape from storms in this life. And life without compassion for others in the midst of their pain is for the arrogant, not for the spiritually sensitive.

The last assertion implied in this sacred text is the most difficult for us to assimilate and handle. It is simply to accept the fact that some building materials are better than others. If I could take Harvey Cox's earlier advice and, indeed, speak with candor, it would be to say that some beliefs are better than other beliefs. Some beliefs are truer than other beliefs. One of the difficulties with saying that out loud is that it signals a sense of superiority, and claims of superiority conflict with the cardinal virtue of tolerance in many parts of the world. And so people who take this position need to figure out how to stand tall and to live with conviction of choice without feeling superior. But I would suggest to you, as you have come into this room this evening, my assumption is that you have come with a conviction that your beliefs are best, most true and more viable than others who do not stand alongside you. Otherwise you would not value your preferred choices and sense of discernment. We treasure our beliefs. We embrace them and allow them to reach back and embrace us.

Consequently, as I live and move and have my being on the face of this planet, I'm helped with this framework, with this paradigm. Everyone believes something. There are no unbelievers. There is no escape from storms and certainly some people have more building materials than others. There is an

inherent inequality in life. And, neither are all beliefs equal. Some are more true and more trustworthy than others.

And my appeal as we think about this important subject tonight is that we not just think about belief, but we do so with a sense of humility, a sense of discernment, a sense of respect and regard for the people who believe differently than we believe ourselves.

Now we come to a definition of evangelism. Candidly, "evangelism" is a word that I would prefer not to use. The subject was assigned by the organizers. I have all kinds of substitutes for that word. Evangelism has a bad image in this world precisely because too often practitioners of evangelism present a posture of superiority. Humility is missing. After all, who wants to be challenged about their spiritual inadequacy? I know of no one who welcomes that kind of initiative.

Ironically, evangelism is derived from the term "Evangelizo" which means "to bring, or announce, good news." The evangelist is the bringer of good news. And although the Bible does not use the term evangelism, on fifty occasions in the New Testament, followers of Jesus are invited to proclaim the good news. Consequently, to evangelize is a verb in the New Testament. It's something to be done.

A scholar from Princeton, Darrell Gruder, contends that there are over 300 definitions of evangelism in print. May I choose one? William Abraham, in his book *The Logic of Evangelism,* contends that evangelism is "a set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the Kingdom of God for the first time." So it's a positive initiative to invite people to respond to the good news and to move from outside to inside, in an initial encounter which involves a response to believe and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Let me take a few moments to articulate some things that evangelism is not. One of the reasons evangelism has a bad reputation is that it is sometimes linked with proselytism and proselytism is viewed in today's world as a derogatory term. It is judged to be manipulative and abusive. This is a fairly new understanding of the term proselytism. In Old Testament times, the term referred to someone who was a part of Israel, who, by belief in Yahweh and acceptance of the law, became a member of the Jewish community. Christianity then took this meaning to describe a person who converted from Paganism. And so until the twentieth century, proselytism was understood and accepted without objectionable connotations. That has changed. It's shifted in a negative manner. It has come to mean to convert or to change another's faith affiliation while using dishonorable means or manipulative methods that either entice or coerce people to alter their beliefs. The label of proselytizer is something that is unworthy. Proselytizers have unworthy motives, their methods are unworthy, and the message is unworthy.

Interestingly enough, in 1931, in India, Gandhi articulated his reaction to proselytism in these terms: "If instead of confining themselves purely to humanitarian works such as education and medical services to the poor and alike, they would use these activities of theirs for the purpose of proselytism, I would certainly like them to withdraw. Every nation considers its own faith

to be as good as that of any other. India stands in no need of conversion from one faith to another."

The Second Vatican Council describes proselytism as "a corruption of the Christian witness"—strong language—"corruption of the Christian witness to appeal to hidden forms of coercion or by a style of propaganda unworthy to the Gospel." It's not the use, but abuse, of the right to religious freedom.

Now, proselytism isn't just a term that's used in interreligious dialogue; it also has application to specific Church connotations. Some churches, in practice, equate evangelism with proselytism, which generates images of sheep-stealing, and distorts honorable witness to the gospel. It is no secret that Roman Catholics are sensitive to proselytism, in the sense of the use of unworthy means to attract members of other Churches, even un-Church people, into their fold. And if you travel to South America and Central America, you'll find that there's tension in Catholic—Protestant relationships because of this very concern. And so meaning of proselytism has shifted. It has broadened. It has become much more inclusive. Where I think we need to distain the practice of proselytism is when proselytism is relating to people different from oneself by using means and methods with ulterior motives in order to convert people. But what's happening in secular literature is that it is moving even beyond the ulterior method definition, where some secular specialists on human rights and international law use proselytism to mean "any attempt by religious believers to win converts from other religions or from your religion." And when we see proselytism move into that extensive and broad an expression, it then curtails the invitation to witness and to make meaning for people, in terms of engaging them around the validity of a Christian perspective. I would suggest that, as religious people, we need to preserve the global practice of articulating our beliefs when they do not disrespect the inherent right and dignity of others. If we do not do that, we will close down communication of religious issues and faith matters even further than they are in some parts of today's world. Do we want an open system, or do we want a closed system? But clearly—evangelism is not proselytism.

The other very brief reference I would like to make is that evangelism is not fundamentalism. Now those of us who were in the afternoon session do not need or desire another elaborate conversation on fundamentalism. Let me just in general terms say fundamentalists, as I understand them, are either-or people. They're black-and-white people. May I suggest they are one-eye or one-ear people? They see with their eye what they choose to see. They hear with their one ear what they choose to hear. Evangelists are not fundamentalists. They are not extremists. They are people who feel deeply about their faith, but they are not fundamentalists.

May I offer also a word of critique on evangelism and evangelists by referring to what I would call the evangelist's vulnerability? The good news announcers are not always respectful and compassionate toward others. Neither are they always concerned about justice issues in responding to people's needs. They genuinely believe that they are right and they are deeply

committed to their cause. They are not always good listeners. Their bias is to tell rather than to listen. Sometimes, their conviction overrules their compassion. And when those dynamics are set free, it does not turn into a positive experience for those who are recipients of their unchecked enthusiasm. Now that does not liken evangelists to terrorists. Terrorists have lost their empathy for the inherent value of human beings. But many Christians consider it their obligation to follow what's often termed "the great commission," that is, to go into all nations and make disciples, to baptize and teach. The early Christians were noted for their evangelizing work.

There's another evangelism limitation. Some might call it an inadequacy or even a heresy. The evangelist's preoccupation is often with personal salvation, that is, to envision faith as an experience with Christ that is profoundly individualistic. And when that dimension of gospel is given primary attention without regard for other dimensions of the gospel, the mandate for social justice, for example, can be ignored and be viewed with simple indifference. The dark side for evangelists is that sometimes they are good news tellers without being good news doers. They have a vision for what I would call "soul care," without the same vision and commitment to "social care." May I suggest to us however, that mature evangelists have discerning minds that believe in the whole counsel of God?

Let me turn the corner a little bit and talk about what evangelism is, beyond the essential definition. What on earth is it? Well, evangelists are people who believe in believing. And as I indicated earlier, they have a special vision for first-time spiritual commitments. David Bosch, a South African theologian and missiologist, expresses it this way: "Evangelism means to tell the good news that Jesus saves. It means to invite men and women in the world to accept Christ as Savior. It means to inform them of the cost of following Jesus. Evangelism always aims at a discipleship, which in turn requires commitment to the purposes of the Kingdom in history." May I suggest to us, as we listen to that definition, that evangelists are not restricted to religion? We have just come through a period of time in this part of the world where antismoking advocates have been incredibly effective evangelists. The same is true for pro-gay rights activists. There has been an evangelistic drive to that social and cultural agenda. And environmentalists, who lobby for reuse and recycle—they too are evangelists. There are lots of people who believe in believing.

We would neglect this area if we did not underscore the importance of the fact that evangelism also celebrates religious freedom. The countries that World Vision works in—almost 50 percent of them—have other world religion demographics. That means the Christian presence is a minority and other world religions are the majority. Part of our own counsel and in formal documents is an emphasis to value our common humanity with all peoples. All people are created in the image of God. All are seeking to answer life's basic issues. Religions are efforts to find God, but they are inadequate in themselves. Therefore, we approach others with humility, knowing that we share common longings and we confess that we do not fully live out our own beliefs.

Therefore, we encourage mutual understanding of each other's beliefs and we relate respectfully to all people. The common codes for religious freedom would say to us that all human beings have the right to beliefs and to change those beliefs, even repeatedly if they wish. They also have the right to form religious organizations, and they have the right to speak to other people about their convictions, even with the purpose of influence. Do we want an open system or a closed system?

Do we want to have dialogue between people who share different views? Is not this an appropriate human endeavor? Or do we say that kind of exchange is off limits? Essentially, what evangelism does is invite choice. Christian evangelism, at its best, demonstrates the beauty of the faith, the virtues of what is true, right and good. Somehow, when it works best, it evokes questions in people, questions to which God's revelation is the answer. And I would come back to simply underscore that it is good news. The Ten Commandments come from a wise God who has honorable intentions for the creation that God loves. The great requirement in Micah—to pursue justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God—is good news in theory and practice. The great command to love, the invitation to forgive, the contrast of generosity with selfishness—these are all good news issues for us.

I was also asked, in the context of answering this question, to address principles of engagement in our post-9/11 world. May I say this carefully: we desperately need increased practices and engagement in what I would describe as our post-progress world. In the dark shadows of the past five years, while we have faster computers, we have Blackberries and iPods with dazzling capacities, we have worldwide Internet and e-mail to connect us globally instantly, our human spirits have been stifled and damaged. And more sophisticated technology is not an adequate replacement for personal dignity and a human quality of life. We have a deficit in bridge-building and reconciliation. We have surrendered to life-denying violence that simply incites more deadly and devastating violence. We have too many countries with foreign policies that flaunt weapons of war rather than the diplomacy of peace. Our post-9/11 world has tumbled us into a post-progress world, and, regrettably, too often the role of religion has been more detrimental than redemptive. We need a new age. We need an age of engagement which includes an engaging style of communicating our faith.

I was in Indonesia a while ago and spent three hours with twenty-five of our World Vision staff. Half of them were Muslim and half of them were Christian. They had worked together for at least two years. Some of them had been together for three years. And in this kind of focus group, if you please, one of the questions I asked them was: "What have you learned from each other, in terms of your religion? As Muslims, what have you learned about Christians? And as Christians, what have you learned about Muslims?" Interestingly enough, the first woman who spoke said, "I am a Muslim," and went on to make her observation. The person sitting next to her was a Christian, and he said, "I'm Christian." And with the cadence of the first two, for twenty-five people, each of them claimed their identity as we sat around the table and

listened to each other. There was something beautiful about that, something profoundly human, something profoundly right for us in this age.

May I suggest to us, as we think about engagement, can we first of all give permission and take permission. That is to say, people have the right to self-define. I also need to take the responsibility to self-define. That is to say, we need to give each other social space, cultural ground on which people can stand. And if we give permission and take permission, that means we can also have mutuality in relationships that can start with acceptance and move into honest exchange. We also need to look for more common ground. We need to become students of each other's faith perspective and see where the connecting points are. Bill Clinton, two nights ago in Toronto, at a birthday party where he got an awful lot of money, said: "The idea that our differences are more important than our common humanity—it is at the core of every single problem we have in the world today. Our differences make life more interesting but our common humanity matters more. Anyone who doesn't believe in it has committed a religious, philosophical and humanitarian heresy."

You, undoubtedly, will know that all world faiths have a common affirmation of what in Christian terms we call the Golden Rule. Articulated by Jesus, it is "to do unto others what you would have them do unto you." Articulated in Hinduism, this is the sum duty: "Do not unto others what would cause you pain if done to you." In terms of Islam, a similar expression: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." There is common ground for us as spiritual people. Can we find that common ground and celebrate it together? One of the comments in the introduction was that, for years, I have tried to work on what is called principled pluralism. Without commentary, just let me read the principles to you.

- Know who you are, what you believe, and then be true to yourself.
- Grant others the prerogative to self-define and be true to themselves.
- Yield not to the temptation of denigrating those who are different from self.
- Extend to others the same rights and privileges you desire for yourself.
- Encourage others to make positive choices about their beliefs and behaviors.
- Encourage others in ways that prompt them to consider the claims of faith for themselves.
- Lobby your life for what enhances the common good.
- Treat others in a way you would like to be treated.
- Expect others to treat you the way you treat them.
- Treat people like God treats people.

Constructive engagement, I suggest, is framed in taking permission and giving permission. It is cradled in relationships of mutual respect.

On a flight last week to the United Kingdom, I was sitting in a bulkhead seat next to a mother and her two children—not my preferred place to sit. One was a five-month-old baby, the other was a nine-year-old boy who had great difficulty sitting still. I have some bruises on my left side from his elbow to prove it.

But they were pleasant people, obviously from the subcontinent of India. I was doing my work thing and had my headphones on, but partway through the flight, I thought I heard the young boy, the nine-year-old, sing a song I recognized. As we were close to landing, I heard him sing again, "Everybody ought to know, everybody ought to know, everybody ought to know who Jesus is."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the evangelist's chant. The message comes from the heart. Everybody ought to know who Jesus is. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Question: The work of Jim Wallace, with the *Sojourner's Magazine,* and his efforts to bring evangelism into a new regard. . . . Well, you know what I'm talking about. Do you think his kinds of contributions are helping people be more open and receptive to the kinds of things that you're talking about with the word evangelism?

Answer: He has been a faithful, discerning person for decades. Sojourner's has had some strong and, I would say, positive influence on the conservative community that he sometimes has had differences of opinions with. I think it's also helpful to affirm that there is a coalition of evangelicals in the United States in particular, who are coming together around social justice issues. And the whole evangelical world globally has an initiative called Micah which, again, is seeking to mobilize the full council of God. We're always going to have diversity in the body of Christ. And again Harvey Cox was inviting us this afternoon in terms of this interaction. Let's keep on that road. We need more modeling on how to deal with diversity in positive ways. One of my appeals in the Canadian context has been that if we had been better at dealing with diversity between us as Christians in this country, we would be relating to cultural diversity a lot more positively today than we are at this point. The globalization of the world increases diversity. Let's be proactive in responding to it.

Question: Hermeneutics aside, you have redefined, in your own way, evangelism. I've spent my life on three continents, and I tell you of someone trying to teach me as a child, [with] a chalk and a slateboard, and then to convert me. I am a Canadian. I spent thirty odd years in this country. I now live and work in the United States, in the South of all places. Your definition that you offered by William Abraham sets an intention. I'm afraid that that intention is still one of conversion as a mentality. If I approach you in dialogue, I approach you with an open heart. But if I approach you with an intention, historical, culturally, that intention has not been an honest one. Can you comment on that please?

Answer: I think your experience is undoubtedly valid and true and still expressed in many parts of the world. And so, when I try to say to you evangelism's vulnerability is telling without listening, I was trying to make the same admission that you are pointing to. I do think that one thing that is happening globally is that there is an increasing intolerance to proselytism. And so there

should be. And so, in our World Vision policies and practices, we do not proselytize or work with those who do. And so, particularly when you're working with vulnerable people and people wrestling with poverty, the power of your presence tilts the scale, by simply being there. We've got to have integrity, but we still witness to the good news. My advice is the principled pluralism code, which I didn't take time to unpack. Simply—we claim our identity, we are what we believe and what we've been invited to become, and as we claim our identity, we also extend to others the same prerogative we claim for ourselves. So I'm going to start there, I want to practice that, and hope that we can lift the level of human exchange to affirming the importance and centrality of faith and spirituality, while we deal with it in ways that are respectful, but also redemptive.

Question: Thank you very much for your enlightening lecture. Would you care to comment on the concept of the cosmic Christ please?

Answer: One result of September 11 has been to put religion as a mainstream cultural issue in ways that, particularly those of us in North America, have not had to deal with before. I mean, how can you be someone living in any part of the world, without having your awareness raised, that we have the two major religions somehow polarized and politicized. Regrettably, and also stereotyped, in terms of the more fundamentalists creating the reputation for the whole of Islam, I would suggest that we have some of the same things happening on the Christian side of things. We have Christian stereotyping by those people who are excessive and more extremely conservative than I wish they were. It's been cited here today as the illustration of the conservative religion, on more than one occasion. . . . They are people who are way over on the fringe. I think we all need to be educated about that. And we need to have a better understanding of Hinduism, a better understanding of Islam, a better understanding. . . . I live in Toronto. It's a cosmopolitan city. So the only thing I know is, I think, the environment invites us to better understand the distinctness of our faiths, and that relationally and in the workplace and in our neighborhoods, we can't escape contact and interaction with people who believe differently than ourselves. And so I think it's an opportunity for us to engage more, to learn more, to understand more, than it has been in previous years. I would say that that's something positive that has come out of these last five years. Not to do that is to simply live with your eyes closed and your ears plugged.

Question: The way I understood you was that, for you, through Jesus, salvation was enough. I understood that as only through Jesus. And that's why I stood up. Is that a correct understanding of your belief?

Answer: The answer is yes. But what I did say is you didn't necessarily have to understand everything that Jesus has done to be a recipient of Christ's grace and mercy.

Question: Are you saying that non-Christians will not be able to reach salvation.

Answer: I'm not saying that. I'm saying that it is through Christ, as I understand the Christian point of view, that life—spiritual life—is extended. And as I said earlier, I trust God's fairness and I don't lose sleep over God being unjust when it comes to issues of eternal giftedness and life after death. I've tried to say that as clearly as I can say it. Now, you need to understand. These questions create the need for some dialogue within the Christian family. I've got some theologians who are in the audience, who are taking notes here as I answer these questions. We have to live with the diversity that we have created. God is the author of diversity. So let's figure out a way to live with it.

Question: I respect your views. If we all believe that God created us, and if God created us in various colors, various races, in various parts of the world, why can't we also accept, as Radhakrishnan put it, that he has shown an infinite number of ways of reaching Him, whatever that "Him" or "Her" is? Because I can't define what that God is. So why can we not accept we're all on the circumference of a circle, and we wish to reach the center, and there's an infinite number of radii, and each radius is of the same length? And instead of trying to go from one radius to another and then waste our time, let us live in peace by following what we believe in, instead of trying to convert one into the other.

Answer: May I just respond with what I want to be sure is clear. Take permission. Give permission. Don't be someone without conviction. Don't be someone without compassion. And so, when I understand what spiritual journey I am on, it is also a continued search. Truth is tough to discern. We all look through our glass darkly. So let's continue on that journey. Let's continue to drive our convictions deep. And let's continue to give people the same prerogative we take for ourselves and let's enjoy the journey. That's not to be coercive. That's not to be compulsive. That's to say, I want to celebrate your identity, but also want to affirm my identity.

Question: Dr. Posterski, I wanted to begin with the illustration of the house built on the rock. And the four things that you said, if I remember them, was: everyone believes, and everyone builds something out of some building materials, and everyone faces storms, and some building materials are better than others. Is that the four? I'm a Christian as well. But when I think about evangelism, I think about sharing good news. And so the way I would do those four, I wouldn't necessarily base it on that text, but I would say: everyone believes something, everyone builds something out of building materials, everyone faces storms, but some building materials are different from other building materials. And then I would add the fifth one and say, "I should share about my building materials and listen to someone else share about their building materials." And that's where I would go with that. And for me, telling good news is just sharing the experience that I have in my building, and then asking about the experience my friend has in her building. Could you comment on that?

Answer: The hermeneutical problem I have with the metaphor is that some houses don't withstand the storm in the parable. The house built on rock withstands the storm. The house built on sand collapses. Now, for me, that's an invitation to continued discernment to build with the best materials. And so, let's continue to have this kind of approach and I can sure live with you, I hope that you can live with me.

Question: I certainly can, but the issue is we took that parable out of Christian scriptures, so it's going to come with a Christian bias.

Answer: And I speak with a Christian bias. That's my identity. That's what I have discerned. But I can assure you that my Christian bias doesn't position me to judge and condemn and to think that I'm better than someone who doesn't agree with me. And I think that's where the derogatory reputations come and that's where some of the damage comes. We don't need to live that way. We can celebrate our life as human beings embracing the God who created us.

Question: The question of pluralism, but more particularly principled pluralism, is something you and I have agreed on for many years. The concern that I have within, generally speaking, the pluralist model of engagement among human beings who are religious, is precisely the question of discernment. Branch Davidians, Jim Jones in Guyana, and any number of other religious movements which continue to be extant have patently proved themselves—and I mention those two because they're effectively speaking extinct—have effectively proved themselves to be positively dangerous to, simply, the human experience. And the question then becomes: How in the course of our engagement, without the kind of inappropriate judging that bespeaks a lack of humility, a lack of compassion, a lack of simple regard for other people, let alone their religious beliefs. . . . How do we, in the community of the world's religions, not just Christianity, how do we discern whether or not a particular religious manifestation is—and let's use fairly innocuous terms—a healthy manifestation or, at the very least, a problematic, if not a positively carcinogenic, manifestation of religion? And that's one of the difficulties, I think, that comes with the argument about we're all simply on the circumference of a circle, and all radii lead to the center. You see, I'm not convinced that is a workable model for the kind of principled pluralism you speak of. I'm not sure that all radii lead to the center.

Answer: I think we have to discern where we have responsibility at more than one level. As a person, I live in some sets of relationships. I have some experience and influence that reaches out of my person. But I think we have some collective responsibilities, organizational responsibilities, to address some of the heretical and dangerous. . . . And to blare the trumpets as loudly as we can when we see aberration that is destructive. Now, I think we do that. We would say violence in families is destructive. We would say racism is insulting and destructive. We have frameworks for discerning and responding to destructiveness. I think in the religious realm, we need to have the same disposition to critique and respond.

9

Religion in an Age of Anxiety

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Professor Hori, Professor Sharma,

I don't know if he is here or not because I'm in the dark as far as you're concerned. I see nothing and you see me. That's the way God looks at the world. So you're put in a "divine position," you're very much responsible.

I made this trip to the wonderful city of Montreal after almost two decades of absence. I first lectured here over forty-five years ago—how life passes—at McGill University when Wilfred Cantwell Smith was director of the Islamic Center here. I accepted this invitation for two reasons. One is the theme itself which is of very, very great pertinence to the world today. So much misunderstanding has come about concerning the role of religion and human life, especially after the seminal and tragic events of September 11th. And secondly, because I feel that the group of people who deal with this issue here, assembled by Professor Sharma and his colleagues at McGill University, are aptly suited to deal with these issues, a bit farther away from the center of political contention that one finds often in these debates in the United States, of course, not everywhere, but in many places.

I entitled my talk Religion in the Age of Anxiety. This might seem a strange title, but I want to begin—since I was asked to speak about disagreements of religion after September 11th—begin with a truth that anxiety itself is not against religious attachment. To speak a bit more philosophically or mystically, our denial of heaven precludes our having our feet firmly on the earth. When the earth begins to shake under our feet, for many people, their eyes look upward toward the heavens. And in every period of human history, periods of uncertitude and anxiety have turned a large number of people toward religion in general and spiritual life in particular, the best example in the history of Asia

being perhaps the Mongol invasion, by the descendents of Genghis Khan, which devastated both eastern Asia and western Asia. And Persia, Iran, where I come from, lost practically half its population and some twenty to thirty million people were killed in this invasion. But the result of it was not only devastation, but rejuvenation of the spiritual life in many, many ways. And the same occurred in China, *mutatis mutandis,* under another condition.

Now what has happened since September 11th, therefore, has presented both an advantage and a disadvantage for the teaching and understanding of religion. And I will say at the outset that I do not believe that the September 11 events have had a deep effect upon Hinduism and Buddhism and Sikhism and Neo-Confucianism and Taoism and Shintoism and the other great religions of Asia, nor the primal religions of Australian aborigines or Africans or the Native Americans. So I shall limit my comments to Christianity, to some extent Judaism, and to Islam, in a sense, Islam in the West. It's paradoxical that this event has essentially affected the children of Abraham, not religion globally, although we have the bad habit today of looking out of our window and whatever we see out there we say, "That's the whole world. It's global." That is not true. The globe is much larger than globalists think, thank God for that. Anyway, I shall limit my comments to the West, and to Christianity primarily, and then turn to Islam, because I suppose you expect me to say something about that.

I believe there are four major effects of September 11th on religion in America. America and Europe are very different in this sense. It was only three days ago that the Pope in Munich bewailed the loss of Christianity in Europe, and that Europeans have become deaf to the call of God—just three days ago, and at a center, a very, very important center, of traditional Catholic Christianity for 1,500 years, in Europe since the Christianization of the Germanic people. And this has not changed very much with September 11th. So I shall leave Europe aside for the most part. That is, September 11th did not make Europe more Christian, but it did make them more hateful of Islam, something which earlier European history had already manifested, going back to the tenth and eleventh centuries. So let me concentrate my attention on America.

Now, first of all, the group of people who are secularists, or against religion as a whole, and believe that religion has been the source of confrontation and contention and conflict and death over the centuries in human history are forgetting the First World War and the Second World War, but that's beside the point. A sizeable group of people in the West, who have a rather deep historical, intellectual background, people who, after the Hundred Years' War between Protestants and Catholics in which so many people were killed, have since turned away from all religious discourse in disgust at the conflicts that had been created, and who have blamed—these are the grandfathers of the present-day secularists—and have blamed religion as the source of violence. September 11th gave an important impetus to this group. And it is only this group that joins most Europeans, where Christian practice is in the

minority—nominal Christianity is there but practice is for a minority—this group, which is a minority in the United States in reverse, is very similar in the further alienation from religion, and attacks religion, as a result of seeing a dastardly act, a great tragedy carried out in the name of a religion.

Of course, here, there are remarkable incongruities and lack of a just and harmonious way of looking at the two sides of the story. Just two days ago, the tragic death of 3,000 people during September 11th was being commemorated in the United States, almost everywhere. But I didn't hear anyone speak of the over 100,000 Muslims who were killed as a result of that. This statement of mine is based on what the *Manchester Guardian* and other Western newspapers have written, not on some conjecture by some Muslim extremist. Over 100,000 people have perished as a result of that act. So one evil act has resulted in another evil act, but the second evil act is hardly ever spoken about, because it is not seen as an evil act. And this also brings up, therefore, very, very important Christian and also Jewish theological issues, which some very honest Christian and Jewish theologians have had to tackle. But in the mass media, in the general ambiance of discourse, such a thing is absent. At least I have not seen it, or have very rarely seen it.

The second reaction that came from September 11th is what is associated with Christian fundamentalism. And this needs a lot of clarification. I do not have time to go into it in depth. Very briefly, fundamentalism began in the early twentieth century by a number of Protestant American southerners. All those three characteristics (are important). There were no fundamentalists in Maine and New Hampshire. Nor were there Catholics. They were Protestants, Americans, and southerners, who, being attacked left and right, by Darwinists and evolutionists from Ivy League colleges in the north, and from the northern intelligentsia, which was much more secularized, thought that the only defense of the Bible would come through a literal interpretation of it. And they say we stick to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and became known as fundamentalists. Unfortunately, this term was used very rapidly in 1979 by the media for the Iranian Revolution, the Islamic Revolution of 1979. So after that, the term fundamentalism became very prevalent politically, predominantly for the Islamic world, but also elsewhere. So now, if I used the word Christian fundamentalist, we have to remind ourselves that it is within the context of the political discourse about this term, which was brought into being after 1979.

Now, this group, called the Christian fundamentalists, comprise sixty to seventy million people perhaps—some people say fifty million—evangelicals, most of whom belong to the southern parts of the United States, and it excludes Catholicism, American Catholicism, and the mainstream Protestant Churches, like Episcopalianism and Methodism and so forth. This group became more strengthened after 9/11. It became strengthened for many, many reasons, but one of them was a greater definition of the enemy as being an anti-Christian and an antireligious force. Now the enemy was no longer Charles Darwin; it was Osama bin Laden. There's of course a very, very big difference. And because this was seen as a living threat—whether all of the threat is true or

not is for others to debate, but certainly a threat of some dimension—this movement grew and, because of the events of September 11th, gained a great deal of political power, which it had never exercised in the United States since perhaps the foundation of the Republic, and that was in any case another kind of Christian fundamentalism. And as you know, today it's a very powerful force and it is in close relationship with what one could call Jewish fundamentalism, in the same way that the nonfundamentalistic elements of Christianity are in close dialogue with nonfundamentalist elements of both Islam and Judaism.

The flowering of what is called fundamentalism is to be seen, of course, in all of the three monotheistic religions, and they were all strengthened during the period after September 11th. But it is not unique to them. There's such a thing as Hindu fundamentalism, which resulted in the destruction of the Babri Mosque or the killing of 3,000 Gujaratis in one day a couple of years ago and many other phenomenon such as Tamil Tigers and what they're doing in Sri Lanka. There are all kinds of things that are going on. This phenomenon, fundamentalism, extremism, is all over the place, and it is augmented everywhere across the world, but especially in the Abrahamic world, by the political events that are carried out by the West against the Islamic world or those parts of the Islamic world which are considered to have abetted the activities of these terrorists who do terrible acts in the name of Islam.

Anyway, one of the important characteristics of Christian fundamentalism, until about two or three years ago—now one detects a little bit of a change—is bringing Islamophobia back to life. What do I mean by bringing back to life? For almost a thousand years, from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to, when Islam occupied the Iberian Peninsula up to southern France, there were Christian political writings against Islam, trying to refute Islam. And since Christ was a central figure of Christianity, they thought the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was also the central figure of Islam. So they thought by defaming him, by attacking him, they would attack Islam. And therefore horrendous biographies appeared against the Prophet. Every accusation you can think of in the dictionary was made against him, from being God forbid, a thief to, doing promiscuous sexual acts and all kinds of things that I, as a Muslim, don't feel comfortable to repeat. This came out in Latin very, very early and determined, for a very long time, the general Western attitude toward him and toward Islam.

But things began to change, especially since the Second World War. It really goes back to Pope Pius XII, before the Second World War, who, sending one of his emissaries to Libya as ambassador, as nuncio of Libya, said to him: "Do not think that you're going to a country of a people who are faithless, infidels, or pagans, or heathens. You're going to a country where people believe in God as we do." This was a most remarkable statement made by a Pope since the foundation of Christianity concerning relation between Islam and Christianity. But because of the political situation of Pope Pius XII through the Second World War, this very important statement is usually covered over. Everything is, unfortunately, determined so much by politics rather than reality. Anyway, after the Second World War, long ecumenical meetings between Catholics and

Muslims as well as Protestants and Muslims, began in Europe and later on in America. One of the foremost figures in that movement came from your country, that is, the late Wilfred Cantwell Smith, my very close friend, who first invited me to Montreal here. I remember that this year is the forty-ninth year since I first participated in an ecumenical meeting in Morocco between leading Catholic theologians and Muslims and also Catholic scholars.

What this rise of Islamophobia has done is practically to have destroyed this fifty years of effort that has been made by well-intentioned Christians and Muslims. Never in the twentieth century, after the debacle, of course, of fascism and those very bitter and demonic political moments in Europe in the thirties and forties, has a religious leader attacked the founder of another religion in terms that people like Jerry Falwell and Robertson and Marshal Graham have attacked the Prophet of Islam. Never. We keep talking about political correctness. Political correctness is correct as long as it does not involve Islam. With Islam, you have a heyday. You can attack anyone you want in any way that you want. I mean, no American station would accept some Christian minister coming and saying that blacks are less intelligent than whites, or the Jews did this and that. There would be fires in the streets the next day. But calling the Prophet of Islam a thief is all right. It doesn't really matter. And this rise of Islamophobia, caused by many Christian fundamentalists, who are completely exclusivist in every way, is not being confronted by the mainstream of Christian Churches. I've had a lot of debate with Catholics and Protestants over the last few years, and I'm very angry at this, because their silence, in a sense, helps the destruction of mutual understanding built over such a long time, silence in attacking these people, not silence while continuing to debate and to dialogue with Muslims. This has been, I think, one of the very unfortunate consequences of religious reaction after September 11th, because it makes more difficult the very much needed discourse between Christianity and Islam. There're many, many people to blame on both sides. On the Islamic side, however, the most extreme accusation of the most strident terrorist-oriented preachers is to call the Christians, the Crusaders. I do not recall a single pronouncement, by anyone, even the most bigoted Saudi preacher, calling Christ a name. I've never heard that. So we do not have parity here by any means, and this has created a problem which is going to cost everybody very dearly.

But parallel with these two reactions, first, further secularization and opposition to religion, second, greater rise of the power of Christian fundamentalism, we have something on the other side, and that is the search for greater inclusivism. September 11th has caused many people in the West, and in America especially, to learn and read more about Islam. Now, of all the great religions of the world, no religion has more difficulty accepting the truth of other religions than does Christianity. For Islam and Hinduism, two of the major religions of the world, it is much easier to accommodate the presence of other revelations. But Christianity is so Christocentric that to accept the idea that God spoke elsewhere is not accepted by most people. And there are some Christian theologians—Hans Küng, John Hicks—who have been

moving gradually toward this direction during the last half century but they are not the orthodox theologians of their denominations anyway. And now you see, since September 11th, a greater interest in becoming more inclusivist, including Islam. Interest in learning more about Islam has suddenly arisen immensely in the United States. The number of Qur'ans that were sold between 2001 and 2002 was several hundred percent more than the number sold before.

The great problem in this, of course, was that the very fact that there was interest in Islam brought pseudoexperts to the market. And I've said, jokingly, there are so many people who are supposed to be experts on Islam and they do not know whether Islam is spelled with an "s" or a "z." They don't even know how to pronounce the (name of the) country of Iraq, whose Islamic heritage has been half demolished and destroyed. This has made the interest in Islam not a very positive matter in certain circles, and has also caused the writing of a large number of books about Islam by people who purport to be scholars. It's like having Goebbels write a book about American democracy. Exactly like that. But they're all in markets and there's an invisible hand unfortunately whereby these things are made to be widespread. The serious books about Islam are somewhere on the back shelf. If you ask for it, they'll get it for you. So this need for inclusivism, which is a very positive thing, and you see it in the rise of interest in teaching of Islam in various American universities, and Canada is very similar, in the sense all of this also has this backlash, as I said, of a major campaign to preserve present-day ignorance, increasing misinformation, and, worst of all, propagating disinformation. Whenever I listen to television—unfortunately I have to do it once in a while to keep up with what's going on—but some 80 percent of every statement made about Islam is factually false. But it goes on and is repeated and repeated and repeated. That is the condition we're in.

Finally, one of the consequences of September 11th has been the rise of messianism in Christianity. Now Christianity, of course, has always had a messianic element. There were medieval saints who expected the coming of Christ and the age of the Holy Ghost. In the very first century of Christianity, Christians expected the second coming of Christ, but he decided not to come, and here we are, 2,000 years later. But every time there is crisis in the world, messianism becomes more powerful among not only Christianity but all religions, including Hinduism, including the expectation of the Cakravarti [Universal Monarch] and the Kalki Avatar, and the Mahdi in Islam, who we're expecting is coming, and Christians believe in the second coming of Christ. Of course, Muslims also believe there's a second coming of Christ, but coming after that of the Mahdi. Anyway, this movement, of course, was strengthened, and it made millions of dollars for those who wrote of this very exclusivist eschatology, in which you would have a number of these nice Southern Baptists be lifted up in rapture to heaven, without even experiencing death, and the rest of us would have to go through the pain of death and go to hell. This, what I call an exclusivist eschatology, has a devastating effect upon the relationship

between Christianity and other religions of the world, and has caused a major crisis within Christian thought itself.

Now all I've said about Christianity is also true, to a large extent, in Judaism, of course, *mutatis mutandis.* There're Jews who are messianists. There're Jews who are fundamentalists. There're Jews who've gone in the other direction to try to open themselves up like Christians, who pay attention to a more traditional understanding of religion and participate even in peace movements with Muslims. Dialogue going on right now, as we stand here, with major Jewish figures, is much more prevalent than it was twenty years ago, which is one of the very good signs upon the horizons.

Now let me turn to the Islamic world, to which I want to pay most of my attention. In the Islamic world, September 11th did not have an effect of turning people against religion. First of all, there're very few secularists in the Islamic world. This has been debated to a large extent: Why is it that there're so many secularists in the West, where the major religion is Christianity, and so few secularists in the Islamic world, where the major religion is Islam? And, for a long time, the answer was, "Well, of course, the Europeans are much more intelligent than Muslims and Hindus and everybody else. Their intelligence allows them to see that religion is false, and they were one of the first people to really have a post-religious phase, that is, a post-Christian history." Now, of course, nobody buys that nonsense anymore, and one has to reach for deeper causes, which is not the subject of my discussion here today. But there's no doubt that there are very few people who are secularists in the Islamic world. The only ones I can remember are a few Iranians in exile in California, who talk nonsense from morning to night, and that's about it. I know hardly anyone within the Islamic world who's secularist. And so that first reaction that came in this country, of already convinced secularists becoming firmer in their opposition to religion because of the events of September 11th, did not take place. And the idea of the forced secularization of society by certain governments in fact began to take a back seat, in such countries as Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, where the governments are supposed to be secularist, where the people are devoutly Muslim, and the governments are all supported by the West, precisely because they espouse the cause of secularism. In these countries, the pressure to secularize society has become confronted more and more with sterner opposition.

Perhaps the most important effect of September 11th on the Islamic world is the weakening of the Salafi/Wahhabi heritage and influence. For many of you in the audience who are probably not from the Islamic world, the word Salafi in Arabic means ancestors, *Salaf* being the person who has come before. It's somewhat like Confucianism. It's a name given to a movement that began in the eighteenth century and became strong in the nineteenth century, by trying to go back to a simple Islam at the origin of Islam, opposition to all of the complexities of city life, of urban life, to Islamic theology and philosophy and art, and especially to the mystical dimension of Islam, which is Sufism, and which is the most universalist and inclusive view within Islam, parallels to what we find in Christianity and Judaism. The Salafi movement has spread through

Iraq, and most of the Muslim East, that is, the Arab East. It did not have any influence on Iran, less so on the western part of the Arab world, that is, North Africa, some influence in Pakistan and India, and some influence in Indonesia, but little. After the First World War, the Wahhabis, of course—that was a special branch of Salafism which was much more militaristic and politically inclined, and which opposed both Sufism and Shi'ism very strongly—have been ruling Saudi Arabia and gained greater power with petrodollars, which became plenty in the 1970s. They came to have the means of projecting their ideology elsewhere. And with the coming of the Iranian Revolution and the fear of the United States and the rest of the West that the revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini would take over surrounding countries, a green light was given, you might say, for the Saudi's to spend millions and millions of dollars in schools in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and later on Central Asia when the Soviet government fell, all across the Asian landmass, and of course within the Arab world itself. And all of this talk you hear about the Taliban being trained in madrasas—madrasa simply means college—being attacked in newspapers, comes back to a decision that somebody made probably a few blocks from where my office is on 22nd Street and H in Washington—I don't know which side, but a decision was made there.

Now, the Salafi movement controlled until recently about 80 percent of the mosques in the United States because of the money that was paid by Saudi Arabia to bring imams and other people who were bound to follow the Wahhabi line. Now all of that has weakened. It is amazing how much it has weakened. Because, of course, the people who participated in September 11th all came from an ideological background that was related to this extremist interpretation of Islam, besides the fact that most of them were Saudis, besides that, of course, Bin Laden is a Saudi, and other leaders of the terrorist movement are related to this ideology. And what is called international global Jihadism and so forth comes out of this background. Now, this movement began to be opposed in the United States, once authorities found out what its consequences were. And the Saudis are not sending imams to American mosques any more now. Within Saudi Arabia itself, what is most interesting, is that the royal family, after 150 years, is now opening the door to Sufism, even in Mecca and Medina. And although they don't come out openly and say it, a number of very eminent Saudi functionaries now belong to Sufi orders which were underground during all this time because they were not officially accepted. And also, for the first time in the history of Saudi Arabia, recently the Shi'ites of Saudi Arabia are allowed to appear on television—to appear on television as Muslims. So there's a great change coming about. But within the rest of the Islamic world, this change depends on the condition—political condition—of the day. As soon as you bomb Lebanese children and people see those sights, interest in this kind of activist, sometimes militaristic, violent interpretation of Islam increases. And when there is more peace and harmony, it decreases. But I would say that, intellectually, no matter what the newspapers say in this country and in the United States, the Salafi Wahhabi movement is on the

wane—intellectually, purely intellectually. It is not on the rise. It is weakening, especially in the last three or four years. You get articles written by people in Turkey, in Egypt, and other places who were once supporters of the Salafi movement, who now try to distance themselves from them.

This current has been complemented by the greater interest in Sufism throughout the Islamic world. Now, this does not mean that this movement itself directly helps Sufism. It means that by removing the dike of Wahhabism, it allowed the water of Sufism to pour down into the valley of Islamic civilization. In Morocco, already, the year before last—I was there—the Sultan of Morocco reestablished a very important ceremony which had gone back for centuries, bringing authorities of Sufism from North Africa together in a place named Marrakesh, which the French shut down when they were colonizing North Africa for fear of people from different places meeting each other. In Turkey, there are now much less strict restrictions placed on Sufi orders and in many other places. You have local conditions, like in certain parts of Pakistan, sometimes among certain groups in Iran—although right now, Sufism is flowering, especially intellectually in Iran—who oppose this or that Sufi order, but that's an epiphenomenon. The major phenomenon is much greater interest in Sufism, which means also inclusivism, religiously speaking. Long before the modern world, Persian poets like Jalal al-Din Rumi and Hafiz wrote about the universality of religion, that God speaks to all people. They took the message of the Qur'an seriously, that revelation is universal. I don't have the time today to quote some poems by these men.

But parallel with that, there's no doubt that, as the struggle with the West continues, as the major problems, such as that of the Palestinians and Israelis, such as Kashmir, such as the massacres of Chechnya and other places continue unabated, and as the tragic wars of Afghanistan and Iraq result in very large number of deaths of Muslims, who are hardly mentioned in Western papers—only if one soldier dies it's in the paper and nobody even mentions how many civilians die—as these things continue, the other wave of a religious exclusivism of the Other also continues, and this is going to be very dangerous for small Christian and Jewish minorities who are still living in the Islamic world, where they've lived together for a long, long time in peace. This includes Iran, where we have Armenians and Assyrians, and includes Syria, which has a large Christian population. It even includes Lebanon, where the recent war in a sense created a crack in the unity of Lebanese society, by the West keeping to call the war, a war between Islam and Hezbollah, while the rest of Lebanon was being bombed to smithereens.

Moreover, in Islam, we have something very similar to the messianic movement in Christianity and it is called Mahdiism. Just three to four days ago it was the birthday of the Mahdi, the fifteenth of Shahban, the month before Ramadan, the fasting month which starts in less than ten days from now. I was giving a talk in Washington at the time. This very issue came up and I mentioned its politicization. It was at Georgetown. And I said then that the politicization of Mahdiism by the present government of Iran, and, to some extent, Iraq, is just a mirror image of the politicization of messianism in Christianity, in what can

be called right or extreme Christianity. But it's a phenomenon that's definitely a consequence of September 11th. Before September 11th, there was already a wave of messianism, going back to Ayatollah Khomeini. People saw his picture in the moon. Some even thought he was the twelfth imam, or the Mahdi, and so forth. And yet this movement was not that strong. But in the last few years, it's become more and more strong and, as we know, all these messianic movements are revolutionary movements, whether it's in Christianity, or the Jewish Messiah or Mahdi—whatever it is in any religion.

And finally, [there is ferment in] the Islamic world because of the lack of seriousness of modernism or fundamentalism as an alternative, towards the revival of interest in traditional Islam. I've said for many years, even before all these events took place, that we do not have in the Islamic world only this division between modern and traditional. That's false. What we have is distinction between modern, fundamentalist, and traditional. And much of what the West calls fundamentalist is traditional while fundamentalism is the other side of the coin of modernism. You cannot say, in the context of Christianity, that St. Bernard of Clairvaux is a Christian fundamentalist because he was such a devout Christian, because there was no modernism at that time. Fundamentalism cannot exist without modernism, and much of its attitude is the same as modernism. But there's the third way, which is that of the majority of Muslims as they have always lived historically, and that is called traditional Islam, in which there has been a much greater interest because of these events. I can tell you that personally. My life has been devoted to it for the last fifty years, I've been writing on this subject, this subject of bringing back to life traditionalist Islam, with its dimension of inclusivism, openness, and vast intellectual and spiritual heritage, which is refuted by both the Salafis and the modernists—by both the Islamic fundamentalists and the modernists—to make use of this intellectual and spiritual heritage to find a modus vivendi with Christianity and Judaism, and to present a version of Islam to the world that can live with the contemporary world without submitting itself to the follies of the world in which we live.

Questions and Answers

Question: Professor Nasr, thank you very much for your talk. You made a little remark about Islam and Hinduism, and you spoke about other revelations of God. I want to just draw your attention to the fact that Hinduism is not a religion of revelation. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and perhaps Baha'i, are religions of revelation. But the question that I wanted to ask you is: After having revealed, making a revelation that brought into existence Judaism and Christianity, are you in a position to tell me, in one or two sentences, why exactly the revelation that brought into existence Islam was necessary? Thank you.

Answer: From the human point of view, Christianity had not been able to hold its very birthplace together. You had these eastern churches that would fight against each other, and the Byzantines, whenever they could get their hands

on these people, would massacre them. Just a century before the rise of Islam, the Byzantine army captured the city of Edessa and put over 5,000 Christian priests to death. And so obviously, this was not going to work out, in contrast to the West, where Christianity became a unified force to create Western civilization. As for Judaism, Judaism was not a religion for the whole world. The Jews never claimed that. They were considered the chosen people. And what about guidance for the rest of the people? And, obviously, each religion has a certain dynamic. It only spreads to a certain amount of area, in light of its own inner structure and the energy which God has given to it. How come that Islam spread so easily over the Christian East, but never to the Christian West. Why is it that Islam didn't sweep over France and Germany and finish Christianity off? God had not willed it. And so the idea that a new religion begins is not one that can be determined by us. But one can also see the need—like today, many people feel the need. Those people who are not devoted to traditional religions say, "Oh, we are in need of a new religion." I've heard that a thousand times. Those who are followers of religions, whichever one it is, they believe that there will not be a new religion, but a return—heaven, once again, manifesting itself in the world in the context the great religions already created. It's remarkable how universal this idea is. As I said, we have the Kalki Avatar, and Mahdi, and the second coming of Christ, and Lao-tzu coming back from the west, and so on and so on. And the North American Indians have very elaborate teachings about this. As for Hinduism not being a revelation, it depends on how you define the word revelation. If the Srutis are inspired texts, like the Upanishads and the Vedas, received by the rishis in India, should one not call it a revelation? It's not simply something human. If it were, it would not have lasted for so many thousands of years. Nothing human endures like that.

Question: I'm a Roman Catholic who has struggled over the political influence of the Vatican in the war against global feminism and its seeking of allies within conservative Islamic movements, as also now, with the government of George Bush with the Christian Right in the United States. Now, the Vatican opposes the entry of Turkey into the European Union—or elements of the Vatican do —because they are now concerned with reestablishing Christendom as a basis of European identity. And this has been opposed by the European Parliament, but the entry of Turkey into the European Union was opposed by the Vatican. So there's that kind of division there. However, in the last decade, if you look at the United Nations and the conferences on women—I was there in New York, and I saw the alliance that builds between conservative Christian movements and conservative Islam over the rise of global feminism. And I wondered if you would comment on that as an element. I know it's outside the purview of specifically September 11th, but I think there's an interesting element that is now there in the modern world about the alliance between these conservative elements in these three religions.

Answer: Think of the global air industry, (which) comes from the West, captures the world, and it's called "global." You must remember that,

therefore, resistance to it in non-Western society, which did not inaugurate this movement, is somewhat different from what one sees in societies which did. Having said that, when you have an international situation, you have major organizations with religious or political clout. They make alliances on the basis of convenience, on certain issues. For example, right now, the United States might be in perfect accord with Russia on some matters but differ completely on other issues. The Church has found an ally in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of the family, composed of male, female, and children. And all the experimentations with new kinds of families and so forth have until now been opposed in Islam and also by the Catholic Church. It is a diplomatic move by the Church to of try to join forces with Islam on this particular issue. On another issue, it will join forces with Western secularists or the Russian Orthodox Church or something else. But you're right. It's not a theological black-and-white declaration of doctrine. It's a kind of diplomacy to further the agenda of each of these Churches or organizations.

Question: With your permission, I'd like to first of all thank you for the broad scope of phenomena you pointed to, but I want to ask your permission also to take exception with two words, and those two words were *mutatis mutandis.* In your presentation, you argued, or suggested, that the situation vis-à-vis Judaism in relationship to Islam is more or less a copy or a clone or close enough to simply be dismissed within two sentences as similar to what's taking place within Christianity. And I'd like to take exception to that. First, the nature of Jewish fundamentalism is very, very different. As a religion, it is based on oral tradition together with a written tradition. It is simply impossible to have a similar return to scripture. Jewish fundamentalists are much more like Bernard of Clairvaux. Of course, there is this aspect of a flip side of modernity that you pointed to applies also, within certain segments. But I think the key element concerning Jewish fundamentalism as applies to Islam is that Jewish-Muslim relations are almost completely overshadowed by the situation of Israel and the Arab states, primarily the Palestinians. And as a consequence of that, the image of Muslims that occupy the Jewish consciousness has much more to do with what's going on in Israel than what they have to do in what's going on with September 11th. As an organizer of a meeting of a hundred imams and rabbis in Brussels last year, I can testify to the fact that what was uppermost on the minds of Jews and Muslims had to do with what's happening with mutual images, the perception and the loss of centuries of common understanding, common living, that have been, in the same way that you described the erosion of Muslim-Christian relations over the past fifty years, similar movements happening in Muslim-Jewish relations but they having very, very little to do with the events of September 11th. And consequently, I would ask for your permission to exclude Judaism from your presentation and to recognize the different dynamics, both as far as how the religion is constituted, but, even more so, vis-à-vis how the recent events and their politicization play into contemporary Muslim-Jewish relations.

Answer: First of all, Jewish fundamentalism is like Christian fundamentalism in one way, in that it takes the text of the Old Testament literally, and therefore claims the land of Israel for the Jews. It's not just a symbolic understanding. It's a literal understanding. It's the foundation for Zionism. And the Christian fundamentalist also takes the Bible literally. But of course, as far as other matters are concerned, Jewish fundamentalism is most of all involved with land. Christian fundamentalism is not involved with its own land, although there're now Christian Zionists, of course, who are as defensive that the land belongs to Jews in the Holy Land as the Jews are. I'm not saying the two are the same. But I was not even talking about Jewish fundamentalism in relation to Islam. I was talking of Jewish fundamentalism as religious attitude within the Jewish community in the West. You have the same things you have in Christianity—further secularism, inclusivism, and exclusivism. All these three currents you also have within Judaism. That's what I really wanted to say. Obviously, vis-à-vis Islam, the situation is based on many different parameters that don't exist within Islam in relation to Western Christianity.

Question: Can we just agree that not every reference to the meaning of a text is necessarily fundamentalist? Otherwise, we run into the impossible situation that only figurative and allegorical readings have meaning. So not every reference to text is necessarily fundamentalist. The rest has to be explored beyond this conversation.

Answer: You're pushing the situation, but since I'm a philosopher and theologian, I have to answer you. It's those very texts of the Bible that have been considered to be contentious from the point of view of modern ideologies that are not accepted literally. That's the answer to it. Alright, next.

Question: I refer to your remark about secularists in the Muslim world. There are very few of them because none are permitted to live. I give you a few examples of Indonesia. In 1965, half a million of them were massacred by the military over there. Your own Iran had 50,000 people from the Left, ranging from Islamic Marxists to the Communists, who were completely eradicated. I come from Pakistan, where if one was a secularist, one would be determined to be an apostate and a blasphemer and, therefore, liable to be killed or persecuted or set aside. I've lived in Saudi Arabia for ten years. I can assure you that the sheer presence, or sheer uttering of the words "separation of religion and state" would get me deported, arrested, or sent out. So, to suggest that there are very few secularists in the Islamic world is a consequence of an open choice is not correct. I would suggest to you that Mosaddeq was a secularist, was eliminated by the CIA, but his large support base came from the secular Left. And to justify their demands and not explain why they have disappeared from Morocco or Tunisia, or that they were the core elements in the anticolonial movement is, in my opinion, a bit simplistic.

Answer: Mosaddeq was a very close friend of our family. Mosaddeq was not a secularist in a modern sense. He was a modernized Iranian. And the effects of

the colonization of the Islamic world throughout was to turn a number of people to modernism, and, therefore, they could be called, in a sense, secularist, but not philosophically. There were people in whose lives religion no longer played such an important role. Let it be noted that the effect of centuries of colonialism of the West on the Islamic world, or, in fact, the rest of Asia, was not to convert the rest of Asia to Christianity—a very small number of people did—but to try to cut them off from their own religion, that is, to create secularized Hindus, secularized Buddhists, secularized Muslims. And I did not deny that. The 500,000 people killed in Indonesia were Communists. And there are a number of people in the Islamic world who turn to the Left and become out-and-out secularists, who are Communists, including in Iran. But it's interesting that in both Indonesia and Iran, they lost. It's not enough to say that President Roosevelt spent $60,000 to carry out a coup to bring the Shah back to power and Mosaddeq found that it was physically impossible (to resist). He was totally upset. There had not been the political and religious background ready for it. The fact is that the result has been what we see before us today. Even if you have two million, three million, five million, ten million secularists in the Islamic world—and I do not think there is more than that number—even if they're left alone, compared to a population of 1.3 billion people, that is not very much.

Question: For me personally, I view science as being in a continual or perpetual state of revelation, and I'd like to hear your views about science and our understanding of physical realities. In the introduction, you made it clear that you had spent some time studying science. I would like to hear you either speak to the reasons you divorced your studies from it or how they could be tied in to the studies you currently pursue.

Answer: I would like to refer to the series of books in the Library of Living Philosophers, those big 1000-page volumes. The first volume for the twenty-first century is about yours truly. And there're two long articles about this very issue that you ask. It is impossible for me in two minutes to really satisfy your need in a way as to be honest and to do justice to this very important subject. But as for science being revelation, the word revelation of course can be used in many ways. You can be playing on the piano and say, "Suddenly a revelation came to me and I composed this melody for a Broadway show." That's also possible. We, however, use the word revelation technically and theologically, on the basis of a worldview which, first of all, believes that the physical or psychophysical world is not the only reality. There is a spiritual reality, and above that, a pure, absolute Reality which is even above the spiritual. And revelation is the coming down, the descent, of something from that upper world to the psychophysical world. That's what revelation is. Now, modern science, as a way of knowing, is not based on that. I'm the last person in the world to say that there's such a thing as scientific method. I think that is absurd for a person who knows the history of science. The major scientists, let's say Einstein's 1905 paper—that is not based upon the scientific method. The theory of special relativity was not based on carrying out experiments in a laboratory and all these things

that we learn to test a theory. His work was based on intuition and not ordinary scientific method. If you want to call that intuition a revelation, we have no qualms. And there have been remarkable "revelations" of this kind, especially in the early twentieth century, with Heisenberg, Schrödinger, Einstein, Max Planck, etc. These four especially should be noted in this context. There's no doubt about that. Now that's not the same thing as the revelation of the Upanishads or the Qur'an or the Torah. Such revelation assumes another structure of reality. Schrödinger who, in fact, followed the Vedantic philosophy as he said, never said that: "I wrote the Schrödinger equation as a result of hearing it from on high, from a divine power." And that's where the difference comes. It's a question of clarifying your vocabulary. But I do believe that much of modern science is intuitive. Most of it is cranking things out from day to day, but for those people who are at the forefront of modern science, they are creative thinkers, and science should not be reduced to what you learn in first-year college as the scientific method. That's all. Good luck to you.

10

PROSELYTIZATION AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Dayananda Saraswati

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

It is understood that as a human being I have a certain freedom to think, to believe, to act, to say. The freedom to practice one's religion is not negotiable. Even in a country, where I am not allowed to actively participate in an overt way in religious functions, rituals, or forms of prayer, no one can deny my freedom to my silent prayers or beliefs. In a free country, where there is freedom of speech and action, I have the freedom to practice my religion. The Human Rights UN charter has the article number 18, which talks about the right to change one's religion. If one wants to change one's religion, one must not be denied that freedom. One can change one's religion in private, and in community, and one should be able to profess one's religion. It is a good thing that we have in the Charter of this global body, a clause protecting religious freedom, but then this freedom, like any other freedom, goes with certain responsibility. When exercising my freedom of speech, I have to make sure that my words do not incite or hurt others. No one enjoys a freedom without responsibilities.

Freedom to practice and preach one's religion is fine. What is the responsibility associated with the freedom on the part of religious preachers? If that responsibility were followed, we would still have the indigenous cultures of Egypt and South America. All the indigenous traditions that were responsible for such colossal structures like the pyramids, which are not only in Egypt but also in Mexico, are no longer in existence. When I visited Egypt a few years ago, I asked the Egyptologist who was with me, if I could see the people belonging to the cultural tradition that made the pyramids, the Egyptologist replied that there was

not a single person to be found. The culture was totally wiped out. The ancient Greek culture, the South American culture, and other indigenous cultures are all gone. All over the world, the indigenous traditions not given to expansionism through conversion programs are slowly disappearing.

A Live Culture Is Protected by One Who Lives It

We first name the culture as "pagan," or "heathen," which amounts to saying that they have no right to exist. Once you call a dog a street dog, you have the right to kill it. We give names so we can do what we want without a dash of guilt. To think that one is right in perpetrating an act of destruction without guilt is acceptable on the part of humanity. Therefore, I have the right to be a Christian, a Muslim, a Parsi, or a Hindu. As it is, it is my responsibility to see that I do not destroy the Christian culture and religion, I cannot retain the culture and tradition unless I retain the Christian. You cannot protect Islam, without protecting a Muslim. To protect is to allow the person to have his or her form of prayer, tradition, and culture. You cannot protect *dharma,* without protecting the *dharmî.*

A live culture or religion is protected by protecting the one who lives it. A practitioner of Islam or Christianity has a right to practise and preach his or her religion. That right I will defend at any forum, but that cannot give you a sanction to have a program of aggression towards and destruction of other religion. You are committing violence. The indigenous spiritual traditions were not aggressive by nature—they did not go about converting others. The number of Parsis is 100,000 globally. They have the right to live; the Jews have a right to live. These are endangered species, the danger to whose existence is by other human beings. The nonaggressive traditions are pitted against aggressive traditions, which have in their theologies certain mandates. In the name of religion, they do what they are doing. In a few conferences I attended, I was asked to help with the committee that drafted resolutions. I always asked for the inclusion of "mutual respect among all religions" as one of the resolutions, but always this mutual respect clause was struck down, and was replaced by "freedom of religion." The freedom of religion is understood by some as the freedom to preach and convert with an evangelistic program. They feel they are mandated to convert, and they think they are saving souls. According to them, I am to be saved. But I do not need to be saved. The situation is similar to the story of the person who went to a pond and started to pull out all the fish from the pond and throw them on the grass. A passerby was shocked and exclaimed: "Hey, what are you doing?" The man replied, "I am trying to save these fish from drowning." Like this person, one can have the right to believe anything one wants. But the person is committing violence through conversion. Conversion is violence. Preaching is not for market share, or it is a propaganda war.

It is against their genius to convert, so it is important to safeguard those cultures not given to conversion, which are the losers at the hands of these proselytizing people.

The previous Pope visited India in 1999. I wrote him an open letter, in which I told him that India was the land in which the native religious culture is Hindu, with a tapestry of ancient traditions. I asked that we please live in harmony with one another. The Pope made a public statement in which he said that in the first millennium they had planted the Cross in Europe, in the second millennium, they planted the Cross in North America, South America and Africa, and in the third millennium, they were going to plant the Cross in Asia, as there were many souls "waiting to be harvested." After this proclamation, missionaries have increased their activity, and millions of dollars are pumped into missionary activities in Asian countries. We saw evidence of this during the recent tsunami, where the missionaries were fishing aggressively for converts in tsunami waters. Whenever Hindus protest such activities, they are branded as fundamentalists. If I do not give you the freedom to convert me, you dub me as a fundamentalist. We do not need religion for perpetrating such atrocities.

Conversion Is the Rankest Form of Violence

The religious person is the core person. Even if you say that you are not religious, that is your religion. One plays many roles in the course of a lifetime—son, daughter, brother, sister, parent, etc. Each role comes with different scripts. I am a son to my parents, and a parent to my son. Who is the person that inhabits these roles? The basic person is one who is related to the whole, to the one called God or Allah. When confronted with the threat of conversion, that basic person is hurt, and the hurt is not shallow. It is a very deep hurt when someone talks against that particular person, or his or her religion, or beliefs. It is rank violence. There are many shades of violence. For us, nonviolence, *ahimsa,* is not just physical—it is absence of all shades of violence, and destroying another culture is the rankest form of violence, and elicits anger. This is to be realized. In May 2006, the Vatican convened a meeting on the subject of conversion, as they are concerned with the increase in activities of neoevangelical sects. At the same time as this meeting was taking place, the Indian ambassador was told that there was absence of religious freedom in India because a state had passed an anti-conversion law banning forced conversions. The act does not have anything different from the resolutions of the Vatican Conference.

How are you going to convert without putting down the other's religion? In the Internet, there was a document issued by the Vatican, coaching the clergy with regard to how the Hindus must be talked to. The document said that the Rsis prayed to the Lord thus: *asato ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrtyorma amrtam gamaya,* which means, "Lead me from untruth to truth, lead me from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and lead me from time-bound existence to freedom from time." Whoever wrote the document quoted the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad correctly, but the meaning was distorted to suit their proselytizing agenda. They interpreted this prayer as a testament to the fact that the Indian Rsis were groping in darkness, waiting to be saved. As an answer to this prayer alone, Christianity came into

the world. This is rank abuse of a sacred text which reveals that all that is here is one non-dual *satyam.*

Ethics Are Not Mandates of God, They Are Manifestations of God

For us, ends do not justify the means. Ethics are not mandated by God—they are another form of God. Therefore, we do not require to be told what to do so that we can enjoy some reward at the end. However noble the ends, they do not justify the means.

Any form of conversion is rank violence against culture, tradition, family, and society. In India, there are congregational religions that can talk to the congregation about how to cast their vote. There are vote banks, and they can negotiate in politics. Thus, it is a big issue for Hindus who vote indiscriminately, regardless of their religious affiliation. Being what they are, they can never think on these lines, and therefore Hinduism suffers a damage.

If the government of Egypt decides to have a housing development complex at the pyramid site, there would be a great hue and cry, as the pyramids are no longer the private property of the state of Egypt, but an international legacy of humankind. The Hindu culture, likewise, is unique, for whatever it is worth. It is the only living culture that says that all is God; space, time, and everything in space and time are nonseparate from God. All that is here is Ishwara, the Lord. Save Hinduism at least for its antique value. If we have problems, we will solve them, let us take care of them ourselves. We have something rich, beautiful, and ancient. Let us have a mosaic of religions in the world, let everyone—indigenous Americans, Africans, Romas—be left alone, so that we can enjoy one another as we are. We talk of saving endangered animals; let us preserve and enjoy the great indigenous cultures of the world, as each and every one of them is as sacred and valuable as Christianity and Islam.

Questions and Answers

Question: Thank you very much for your moving speech. I'm a Catholic theologian. I belong to a movement in the Christian Church that is opposed to proselytism. We think the mission of the Church is to serve justice and peace and reconciliation. The question I have is the following: Do you think, today, the greater danger for Hindu culture and these great Asian cultures is not Christian mission, but rather the globalization of capitalism? That in consumer society, there is a materialism that is working, that is creating a new vision and new wishes among ordinary people and detaches them from traditional values?

Answer: Globalization may bring about some changes in certain forms, but I don't think it can really spell a danger to our culture, which has some intrinsic worth... Culture is language, culture is music, culture is dance, culture is ornament, culture is dress, culture is food. Definitely, there'll be some changes

in all of them, but still, all these have a certain intrinsic value and, therefore, they will survive. But what will really destroy India is only religious conversion.

Question: You talked about Parsis. Parsis is an endangered species (and you are absolutely right—I am a Parsi, and I am a Zoroastrian) because of proselytization. Our Prophet, who was really an Aryan prophet, brought the people from a path of deceit to a path of truth. And what I want to ask your comment on, that people who choose, of their own free will, to adopt another religion, would you call that conversion, or would you accept their human rights to do that?

Answer: In the beginning itself, I told that is not negotiable freedom. That freedom everyone has got. Anybody can change. That's a different thing. Of one's own will, if one changes, nobody can stop that. That is not negotiable at all.

11

Religion, Identity and Violence

Rabbi David Rosen

I am reminded of a story of this gentleman who survived a flood in Jonestown, Pennsylvania. The media, of course, was very interested. He was a sole survivor and they came up to him and put these microphones and cameras in front of him, and then people invited him to come and speak and he got paid very nice honoraria for presenting on "How I Survived the Flood in Jonestown, Pennsylvania." After earning a good living and living quite a good life, he leaves this earthly abode, and he's met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter, or the angel Gabriel, whichever version you prefer. He is told that in order to introduce himself, he is invited to give a talk to the residents and the title will be posted up on the notice board. So the man said, "Fine, I'll give a talk on how I survived the flood in Jonestown, Pennsylvania." So the angel Gabriel said, "Are you sure that's what you want to talk about?" He said, "Listen here, Gabriel, I made a good living down there talking about this. That's my topic." So the angel Gabriel said, "Very well, but you should know that Noah is in the audience." So sometimes, speaking on these topics to those who are academics and practitioners in this field, I feel a little bit as if I'm speaking with Noah in the audience. But I hope there will be some dimensions of my comments which will be useful and interesting.

The late Pope John Paul II said that "violence in the name of religion is not religion." Similarly, the declaration of the religious leaders of the Holy Land declared that violence in the name of religion is the desecration of religion itself. And then there were many, I imagine, who have already spoken at this conference, but one hears very frequently from scholars and representatives of different religious traditions that explain that violence in the name of religion is the hijacking of religion, and what we see today in areas of so-called religious conflicts are, of course, nothing of this sort. They are essentially territorial conflicts, or

conflicts of other vested interests that exploit religion to their own particular ends. And there seems to be a lot of good sense and fairness in that analysis.

But all these comments still beg the question: Why is it that religion is so easily exploited in this manner? And the people can actually—many even within John Paul the Second's own Church—strongly disagree that violence is automatically against religion. In fact, they're not even sure that he would necessarily have agreed with such a blanket usage, because, after all, the majority of our traditions at some stage are going to legitimate violence in the form of self-defense. And then comes the big question: What and when is self-defense? The vast majority of individuals who provide any kind of religious sanction in any context of any conflict never believe that they are doing something wrong by that. They'll find the rationales in order to be able to defend themselves.

So what is it that lends itself to this rather easy manipulation of religion for vile intents? Well, part of the answer, of course, lies within the power structure. There's this wonderful moment in the very famous eleventh century book that some of you will be familiar with, written by Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, one of the great poets of Jewish Spain. And in his magnum opus—his philosophical magnum opus—which is known as the *Book of Kuzari, King of the Khazars*—there's a dialogue between the rabbi and the king, at the end of which the king converts to Judaism. The subtitle of the book is very significant, and shows that he is living after the golden age, because it's called *An Apology for a Despised People.* There are two occasions, however, in this dialogue, which is an apologia for Judaism, when the rabbi is caught out and he doesn't have an answer. And of course, this is Yehudah Halevi's way of acknowledging a problem. And the one that I wanted to mention is when the rabbi says to the king, "You know, we Jews were not like the Christians and Muslims. The Christians talk about love, but look how they hate and kill and all the violence. And the Muslims, they talk about justice, but look how unjust they are and how much oppression there is. We Jews, we don't do that sort of thing." "Oh," says the king, "Of course you don't do that sort of thing. You don't have the power to do that sort of thing. They have the power to do it." And of course, this is a very important moment in the book, because it is Halevi's critique of power, preceding Lord Acton by quite a few centuries. And certainly, this is a problematic dimension of religion, when it supports or is part and parcel of power structure. But that doesn't really go far enough in explaining the problem. The problem is complex, obviously. I believe, nevertheless, that at its heart, it concerns the whole question of the relationship between religion and identity, something that many important sociologists, or ethologists, have written about.

And of course, identity is what gives meaning to our lives, our understanding of who we are. Religion seeks, therefore, to infuse those components of our identity with purpose, with meaning, with direction—who I am as an individual, who I am as a member of a family, who I am as part of a community, what is the purpose of my existence as part of a people, as part of a community, indeed, in relation to humanity and society at large. These are the building blocks of our psychospiritual welfare and we disregard them at our peril.

Indeed, many social scientists have written very eloquently—many popular ones, you'll remember the writings of Alvin Toffler, of the whole question of drug culture and physical abuse and various cultic activities as a reflection within our society of a search for meaning, on the part of those who are either deracinated or are bored and lacking stimulation, and of this important need for an individual to feel a sense of purpose for their identity. In other words, the idea that because identities can be abused—which I'll come to in a moment—we can somehow eliminate them is fundamentally fallacious. We have this essential need to understand who we are and religion invests this self-understanding with purpose.

Now, in understanding who I am, by definition I understand who I am not. So identity not only tells me what my own value is or what I am, but it enables me to understand what separates me from others. Now this can be used in a constructive way or it can be used in a destructive way. It can be used in a manner in which I seek to enrich the other and enrich society, or in a manner in which I isolate myself from society—the image of a spiral might be helpful here. Our identities are circles within circles, from the smaller to the larger, and the more secure we feel in the wider circle—something that many scholars have pointed out—the more, therefore, we will be able to relate to it. So if my own particular identity feels comfortable in the wider circle of the society of which I am a part, the more likely I am to play into it and enrich it. If I feel threatened by that society, if I feel unwelcome within it, then I am more likely to isolate myself. And therefore, identities, when they are under siege, are inward looking. And because religion seeks to give meaning to identity, in those communities that are under siege, religion tends to assume an inward-looking approach. In fact, in fairness, if you look at the great prophets of Israel, you can see two very different models. There's the model of challenging the people to be righteous and just, condemning them for ignoring the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the Other, even for their own ethnocentricity, like the prophet Amos. "Are you, the children of Israel, not, unto me, like the children of Ethiopians?" Do I care a damn about your own ethnic origin? Do you think you're the only ones I care about? "Did I not bring out the Philistines out of Caphtor and the Arameans out of Kir?" Challenging the dangers of insularity, or ethnocentricity, or lack of concern for the marginalized and impoverished make the prophets of Israel stand out with grandeur. But that is always done when the people are secure in their lands. They never challenge the people, when those prophetic texts refer to their brethren and sisters in exile. When they are in exile, when they are feeling vulnerable, or wounded, and they don't know what the future holds for them, there, the role of the prophet becomes essentially one of nurturing their identity, giving them a sense of hope. It is by definition introspective, sometimes even insular.

So religion has these different dimensions to it. And the degree to which it is used in a constructive way requires a great deal of security, first of all, within the personality, herself or himself, to be able to move beyond their own perceptions. But it also requires, in a broader context, the securer context, the

securer environment, which people feel comfortable and welcome and therefore capable of relating to it. So, all too often, we find in situations of conflict that religion, instead of encouraging people to move beyond their own trauma and own fears, tends not only to support it, but even to exacerbate it and feed on it. Often, as we are all familiar with the relationship between the inferiority complex and the superiority complex, where identities feel they are demeaned outside, then the natural recourse is not only to affirm that one's identity is better, but in the process to demean the other and even to denigrate the other. The historian Richard Haftstadter describes this image as "a perfect model of malice." And that, of course, is where the real danger of the abuse of religion lies, where it is so easily to be portrayed as the battle in order to reinforce my own sense of identity, the battle between the godly and the godless, seeing myself and my own as the righteous against the evil on the other side. And therefore, you see situations in which religion provided the nurturing quality that can be so easily exploited to be a demonizing force. The need for that can, of course, go to a great deal of extreme.

I would say that when religion becomes violent in any form, or when it is used to justify violence, it is reflecting some kind of trauma and/or alienation. When people feel alienated from their broader context, they are likely to turn to religion in the particular models which I have tried to identify, in relation to identity, nurturing that identity, demonizing, denigrating the other. What we call, often unscientifically, fundamentalism, or, more correctly, religious extremism, tends to be a reflection of that alienation on the part of people, alienation because of economic, social and political reasons, historical reasons, but above all, psychological reasons. That alienation reflects a sense that, even unconsciously, within those who perpetrate these violent acts, that they are unwelcome in the broader context, that they are disparaged, that they are looked down upon, and this creates this inverse response, in which they see themselves as engaged in battle for the sake of God, against the godless, and in league against their interests. In these cases, we see a very problematic tendency in the way religion is expressed and articulated. Very often, this attitude is most problematic of all for people within their own community, who are seen as greater threat to this Manichean, simplistic worldview.

But while religions can be so easily abused in this way, to nurture identities under siege, they do have potential, obviously, to move us beyond the limitations of one's own particular identity—the spiral image, again, to be able to play into the wider context, and to bring people beyond the limits of their own particular concerns and preoccupation with their own community, because all religions affirm this universal dimension of our identities. They all teach principles that bond us and bind us beyond our specific confines. But as I said, to be able to articulate that requires a great deal of confidence—confidence both within one's own identity and confidence in one's place within the broader context, in which one's identity finds itself.

Therefore, one of the most crucial aspects in facilitating a mentality—religious mentality—that is not inclined to violence, that is not alienated, is ipso

facto to make that identity feel welcome. This seems to me to be the wonderful metaphor of the father of all of our Abrahamic traditions, Abraham. The metaphor of Abraham within both the Muslim, Christian and Jewish traditions, of course, is the symbol of this important quality, hospitality, not adequately appreciated. You will recall the passage in Genesis, where Abraham is sitting at the entrance to his tent, waiting for strangers, to be able to offer them hospitality. According to the midrashic Jewish homiletical tradition, all four tent flaps were raised during the day so Abraham would not miss any wayfarer coming from any particular direction. And you'll remember the Biblical text. He sees three men, and he runs up immediately to call them to bring them into his tent to offer them hospitality, refreshment, and to be able to wash their feet, and give them some rest on their journey. And these characters are referred to as men. What's really interesting is, in the next chapter of Genesis, two of them go on to Sodom and Gomorrah to warn Lot and his family against the impending destruction of those cities. And there it starts off the chapter, "and two angels came to Sodom." And one of the great Hasidic masters asked why are they only referred to as angels when they go to Sodom, but to Abraham, of all people, they are just referred to as men. And the answer is because Abraham did not need to be told they were angels, because Abraham saw the angel in every human being. In other words, the affirmation of the identity of every human person being created in the divine image is the way we truly express Abrahamic hospitality.

This is the power and the importance of the interfaith encounter. The interfaith encounter and dialogue stands opposed to those within our respective communities who seek to affirm an exclusive and insular perception of the world and prefer this Manichean dialectic, as a means of being able to preserve power to deal with their own insecurities, in the face of what they perceive as a hostile world. And therefore, in a sense, there is a very important dimension, just to the very fact that such a gathering like this takes place, that we are able to show those within our own communities that one can affirm one's particularity at the same time within the universal context. And thus those who often disparage the interfaith conversation as just being conversation don't understand the importance of this psychological dimension as it relates to identity and the wider society. It is the real challenge of our times. It is indeed the prophetic challenge, but it is the challenge today, more than ever before, to be able to maintain our particularity that gives a solid foundation to our understandings within our respective traditions of truth and of meaning and purpose, to whom we are and why we are, within a context that can affirm, and appreciate the Other, as the blessing of diversity as part and parcel of the creation at large. If God creates us in all our diversity and relates to us in different way, then it seems compelling to be able to appreciate that there must be diverse ways of relating to God.

But beyond that is the other important dimension, a dimension which becomes no less significant, perhaps even more, in terms of combating violence, and that is the need to be able to bring this message, and to bring the importance of this psychological dimension or spiritual dimension to the

attention of those who are in positions of political leadership and responsibility. And this is not an easy thing to do. There has been a tendency on the part of politicians to see religion precisely as part of the problem, and therefore to have nothing to do whatsoever with it, as something which seeks to overcome violent conflicts, and that has been the case in the Middle East.

An illustration of this was seen on the lawn of the White House when the famous handshake took place between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat. There was no identifiable Palestinian Muslim religious figure there. There was no identifiable Israeli Jewish religious figure. The implication, conscious or unconscious, of the Oslo Peace Process was, "You religious people keep far away, because you only make problems. You only mess things up." And you would understand why that perception may be there when you see some of the terrible things done in the name of religion. But it is a fundamental fallacy, because it fails to understand how profound the religious dimension is to the identities of the peoples involved. In our context, similar, as I mentioned, to a vast majority of conflicts in the world, it is not in essence a religious conflict. It is a territorial and national conflict. But the religious dimension cannot be ignored because it relates to the identities of the people who are involved, and therefore can easily be exploited, and be exploited mercilessly.

In fact, what we've seen in the last six years has been a kind of religionization of the conflict. If you don't want religion to be part of the problem, then you have to make it part of the solution. Simply to disregard it is a fatal and tragic error. And indeed, the message was conveyed by the peace process that this initiative was inimical to the interests of the most fervently, passionately observant within both communities. I'm not entering here into questions of judgment or equivalencies. But whether it was the carnage of the innocent by Hamas suicide-homicides or whether it was the murder of innocent Muslims who worshipped at the Ibrahimi Mosque at the Cave of Patriarchs or the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir—all those acts of violence were done with a conviction on the part of the perpetrators that that's what God wanted, that that process was against God's interests. And if one doesn't want to leave that space open for the extremists to be able to capture it and exploit it because of the needs of their own perception of their threatened identity, then one has to make sure that the moderate voices occupy that place. Therefore, it's not only the responsibility of religious leadership. It's the responsibility of political leadership to engage those voices, to empower them to support those political initiatives.

There was an initiative we took that many of you know about—some of you here have heard me speak about it—that took place in Alexandria in 2002, where we brought together for the first time ever the religious leaders of the Holy Land, and that's both wonderful and pathetic. It's pathetic that they've never ever been brought together before. What was wonderful was that we managed to do it. But we managed to do it in no small measure because two enemies, who've probably never agreed on anything, agreed on the text of this declaration, namely, Yasser Arafat and Ariel Sharon. Both had an interest, after September 11th, in being seen to be on the side of good religion against bad

religion. And we couldn't have held this initiative without the involvement of President Mubarak, who until then had been very, very hostile toward any kind of engagement with religious institutions. Now, that declaration didn't lead too far, because violence continued on a political level. But nevertheless, it does reflect something very important. It reflects the essential need for religion that relates to the identities of people involved in situations of conflict to be engaged constructively, if one is to overcome the violence that all too easily exploits and abuses religion. Political processes require political initiatives. But political processes that relate to the identities of the people cannot simply succeed on their own. They have to have the support of what one might be called a psychospiritual dimension that provides the glue, the cement, without which they cannot hold together.

In summary, if we don't want religion to be the problem of identities, we have to make sure that religion is part and parcel of the solution in relation to identities in conflict. Our sages in the Talmud referred to Torah, which is sometimes used to mean specifically the five books of Moses, but more often than not, to mean Judaism at large. They refer to it both as the elixir of life and the elixir of death. It depends on how it's used, and how it's used depends substantially on the context in which people find themselves. But today, in our globalized world, where every area of conflict has ramifications beyond its local context, and especially the conflict in my neck of the woods that I've referred to as a lighting conductor for so many complexities and so many issues, and therefore there is all the more reason that we need to address it seriously. In summation I believe that the constructive engagement of religion is essential for the resolution of conflicts, to ensure that the spiritual dimension that nurtures the identities of people, even when they're caught up in conflict, can be a source of blessing and not a curse. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Question: My question deals with translation of what you have said so well, so elegantly, and what has certainly been in my heart and, I'm sure, many other people's hearts too. Presently, I know one of the things that I deal with, in trying to get these sorts of ideas out, in terms of gaining purpose, and those who have purpose aren't wandering around like nomads being caught up by any other person who has a negative purpose in mind. The thing is, translating those ideas, or I should say, expressing them to the common folk who are the victims, who are the ones caught up in the machine, who are the ones caught up in the systemic misuse of spiritual power. . . . And the thing is, it is a difficult task to engage the people. How can we, especially those attending the conference who have this in heart, maintain the courage that it takes to engage the folk, because there are others who are willing to engage them, as you know, toward negative ends. The thing is to really engage folk, to really hold their pain, walk with them and talk with them, and to indeed see the angel in them. That takes work.

Answer: Absolutely. And you have, I'm sure, much more wisdom than I have in this regard. Your own comments reflect your understanding of that and, to some extent, reflect the—I wouldn't say disingenuity in my comments—that's not fair—but, to some extent, the easier path that I tread. I tread the path, to some extent, of foreign policy, rather than of home affairs, because my role is basically to be ambassador for Judaism to the religions of the world. So I'm seeking to overcome that when I engage the Other, and therefore, my call that I was issuing, basically reflecting my commitment, is to be able to see the divine image in the Other, who is not part of your community. But in a way, you're absolutely right. In a way, that's often easier to do, than to do it within the context of your own community. And certainly I, as an Orthodox rabbi engaged in interfaith relations, until recently, was a very rare bird, and often subject to a great deal of criticism within my own community. An organization of which I am a founder, is called Rabbis for Human Rights, which is focused primarily on Palestinian human rights, out of a conviction that this is, first of all, what our religion teaches, because every human being is created in the divine image, but also of a conviction that human rights is an indivisible concept. If you allow it to be disregarded in one place, it will come back to haunt you in another. When I've been criticized within my own community, it's hardly ever been because I care about Arab human rights. It's because I work together with Reform rabbis and this organization includes rabbis from the different streams of Judaism. And therefore, that reflects, in a way, some of the internecine nonsense that we have to deal with when we try to move people beyond the particular positions they are at. As you correctly say, and there is a parallel to what I'm saying, we're asked to have a lot of compassion and a lot of understanding and a lot of patience, and I'm not sure if I have enough. There is a challenge within our own communities. We have to be able to reach out in constructive ways. And you're absolutely right—if you'll forgive me again for just echoing your comments—the real word is translation. I often say that even if I'm speaking Hebrew all day, I'm speaking half a dozen different languages, because I have to relate to people where they are. We've managed to move our rabbinic establishment in Israel in an incredible way. We now have structures for dialogue with the Catholic Church, with the Anglican community. We've had two world congresses of sheiks and rabbis from the Muslim and Jewish world. And some people in this room have even been present at some of those encounters, and it's managed to involve a spectrum, not only of the Orthodox establishment, but elements even of ultraorthodoxy within Jewish life. The vast majority who participated at these congresses have been imams and rabbis who've never before met a person of another faith. And this has been a great achievement. But in order to get them there, you have to speak a different language, exactly as you say. Therefore, I speak so many different languages, all at the same time. Some people might think this is disingenuous, but in fact, it's the way you got to go if you want to engage them constructively. So, in the final analysis in this rather long, convoluted response to your question, I have no other answer other than the great gift that the Almighty has given us. Not for nothing is He referred to in Islam as Ar Rahman Ar Rahim. In fact, in Hebrew we also refer to Him as Ha

Rahmanan, the most merciful one, the compassionate one. To be merciful and compassionate, is of course, exactly what Jesus of Nazareth taught. And of course the religions of the East teach the essence of compassion and of regard for all. So this is our common legacy. My basic message, however, is that when people feel really wounded, it's much more difficult for them to be compassionate. And, therefore, the answer is, again, by treating them with more compassion, one can get them to be more compassionate. This is very difficult. This requires a lot of patience. It requires a lot of devotion. But in the end, compassion and love are what overcome the alienation and the sense of woundedness.

Question: I was thinking as you were speaking about the little I know about the different religious groups in Israel. Maybe you can speak to how when the question relates to the fact that there are some who seem permanently threatened and others who don't, and so on, if that makes sense.

Answer: It's the subject of a whole day's seminar. But let me just say this: As difficult as it is for people from other communities to appreciate, everybody in our neck of the woods sees himself or herself as the victim. And everybody sees themselves as wounded by the Other. They all see themselves in different paradigms. Palestinians see themselves as vulnerable in the face of Israeli power and might. For Israelis, Palestinians are a fifth column both hostile and threatening. The Arab world sees itself as vulnerable and disrespected on the part of Western power and globalization, consumerization, imperialism, whatever, all those different things. Therefore, everybody sees themselves as the victim, everybody sees themselves as vulnerable, and everybody is waiting for the other to take initiative, and for a gesture to come from the other. That is why the role of third-party counselor who can really engage the trust of both sides is so important. That is why this initiative in Alexandria—that was actually taken by a man who I should have given credit for, and now I will, Lord George Carey, the then archbishop of Canterbury—was so important. He was able to gain the trust of the different parties involved and therefore able to bring them together. And this is actually what the international community should be doing much more to resolve the conflict there. They should be working harder together to gain the trust of all sides. Now, of course, these paradigms which I spoke of purely in terms of national and political terms relate to the religious identities, because we all carry with us our respective religious baggage and history, and we all interpret history according to our own sense of victimhood. And of course, the Christian communities in the Holy Land don't see themselves as part of the large, powerful Christian communities in the world, let alone the Christian communities in history. On the contrary, they see themselves as being the greatest victims of that kind of mentality and that particular approach. So everybody therefore reads history according to their own particular perspective. And there are even the internal feuds between them. I mentioned, I made reference to, internal Jewish tensions. But that pales into insignificance between some of the tensions between different Christian communities in the Holy Land and their historical attachments there. If you've been to the Holy

Sepulcher, you'd be fully aware of that. Woe betide if a person from one Christian community steps over into the tile that borders the area of another Christian community at a time of religious worship, where they have their particular rights to conduct their worship at that time and place. This leads to fisticuffs. In fact there were two bustups, physical violence, between Franciscan monks and Greek Orthodox priests last year over these particular questions. Now they look ridiculous to us. But they're not ridiculous to them, because for them, these are issues that relate to their identity. They see themselves as preserving this historical attachment that gives meaning and purpose to who they are. And, therefore, to get over this abuse of their identity, we need to be able to offer them much more compassion and understanding. That's very difficult when you're feeling abused yourself. You're bringing with yourself your own historical roots and your own problems. That's why it's important to be able to have the outside parties, the counseling forces. The problem happens that people, because they are bound up with the identities of the different communities caught in conflict, that they naturally want to be empathic with their own sisters and brothers of a particular community, and that's the way it should be. Unfortunately, however, in being empathic, they often feel there is a need to somehow be insensitive, that is, lack empathy, for the Other caught up in the conflict. And that is the seed of the cycle of violence, in which we get into this vicious zero-sum mentality, instead of a win-win mentality. What we need, in our part of the world, is a little more empathy and understanding for all sides caught up. And if we have a little more empathy and understanding and positive engagement, in ways in which one can contribute constructively, it could make a lot of difference. I must say—it's important to let you know for those who are unfamiliar—we have a great deal of interfaith activity in the Holy Land. You know there are within Israel seven million citizens, of whom a million are Arabs, the vast majority of them are Muslims. We have, in the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, some seventy organizations which are devoted to promoting relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews in different ways, in different dimensions. There's a lot of very positive activity. And then there are the organizations that go across the conflict in relation to the West Bank and Gaza in different ways—philanthropic, educational, social, as well as political. The more we would have support from outside for those specific engagements that bring people together and work together over those divides, the more healing can be brought to bear. Unfortunately, what tends to be the case is people exclusively supporting parties and positions that think that somehow they're defending the interests of their community by undermining or by disrespecting or by showing a lack of empathy for the needs of the Other.

Question: Considering everything you said, would you believe that, at this point, we need more of a therapeutic plan before a peace plan? And that ultimately, the step to a peace process is a therapeutic process? Now how can religion help us in devising a plan of therapeutic recovery? That we really need to (do is to) bring people who have been victimized, into a period of recovery

that would lead them to the safe space within that creates the peace within, that helps them to become peacemakers.

Answer: Yes, I think that's exactly right. But in practice, we don't have the time to do it in this particular way, because every time you start doing this necessary therapeutic process, we will be undermined by political events, which immediately throws us back. And, again, getting back to my earlier comments, building requires much more systematic effort than destroying. It's so easy to be able to destroy in one moment what takes a long time to be able to build. So any therapeutic initiative has to be in tandem with a political initiative for it to have any chance of succeeding, and that's my call from here, to somebody who will carry through to whoever can be able to contribute, as I seek to carry through myself whenever I have the opportunity of contacts to political leadership. I don't think that religious leadership in our part of the world can be the spearhead, because religious leadership—institutional leadership—that relates to the identities tends to be, in our part of the world, appointed by the political authorities, and therefore subject, if not in some cases subjugated, by political authorities. But if the politicians can understand the importance of this point that you have grasped, then they can understand the need to be able to have any kind of political initiative, the parallel initiative, that provides what I've called the psycho-spiritual glue, which you more elegantly call the therapeutic dimension, without which no political process will hold together.

Question: Thank you Rabbi. Brilliant, by the way. I think I got to get my dictionary out to check some of those words that you were using before. I want to bring it to a more mystical question about the Torah itself being the elixir or the Tree of Life or the Tree of Death, which in the Zohar is also the Tree of Knowledge for good and bad. In my awareness, the Tree of Life represents the world of all good, and when Adam and Eve sinned against the Creator, they did so by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. And in my awareness, the Torah contains 613 commandments, half of which—248—are good, and the remaining is knowledge of bad. So the Torah itself represents what is knowledge of good and bad, and represents this world of duality that we live in, where we struggle with our neighbors, instead of having love, which is more like the world of all good. And just to bring in this part of the question, part of the problem, from the religious aspect, with Torah is that the religious Jews can quote the Torah as saying, "This land is ours," as it says in Torah. It really adds a difficult dimension to the struggle when those beliefs are so strong. And what I wanted to ask you is: Do you see that the Jewish people can move past Torah as not being the ultimate way to connect with God, to move past the Word, and to return to that state that is inherent in each individual that represents our direction connection with the Creator?

Answer: With the vast different interpretations of the Jewish sources, you do have different approaches which may, some would say, have come under more Gnostic influences, that would see more of a dualism than uniformity. I'm not

sure that it's necessary or so helpful now to be able to go into the question of interpretation of the question of good and evil. But with regards to the most important question that you have raised, and it really related to the gentleman before, who used the question of translation. . . . Because if I'm going to succeed in arguing the cause to somebody who is rooted within tradition, that sees scripture not simply as a cultural legacy, but as the ipsissima verba or the literal word of God, I can't talk to that individual in cultural terms, or in terms of the evolution of religion. I therefore have to argue my case on the basis precisely of the commandments. For the benefit of everybody here, the question he was referring to were the positive commandments and the restrictive commandments in the five books of Moses. In other words, a commandment that tells you not to put a stumbling rock in front of a blind person, that is a restrictive commandment and therefore referred to as a negative commandment. But I wouldn't say it implies any inherent negativity of course. I would see therefore the positive injunction simply articulated in a negative way, to behave positively toward those who are handicapped. But generally, for such person who is coming from a position of Orthodox commitment, I have to be able to argue in his or her language, in his or her terms. And therefore, when people, for example, say to me, "How can you be both Jewish and democratic? Isn't there a contradiction between being a Jewish state and being a democratic state?" I say to them that, in my opinion, there's no contradiction, but the alternative would be a total contradiction, because at the heart of Judaism is the affirmation that every human being is created in the divine image, and therefore the democratic system is the system that seeks to maximalize it. And therefore, if Judaism, if a Jewish state is not a democratic state, then it is not a true Jewish state, because it has undermined its fundamental principle with regards to the dignity of the individual. So what I'm doing is essentially interpreting, arguing, from within the context of their points of reference. Now, to ask them to go beyond Torah is basically asking them to question the divine authority of that revelation. I'll get nowhere in doing that. What I need to do is to make it clear to them that Torah affirms the dignity of each and every human person. And I would use the paradigms as I've tried to use today, whether it's the narrative of Abraham, whether it's the text, whether it's the Great Rule, or love your neighbor as yourself, which is sometimes interpreted restrictively. I would call on those resources that would emphasize its universal application. And I would therefore argue precisely in that context, that even if Torah does mandate the land—not even, the Torah does mandate the land—but mandating the land never gives you the right to use it to justify any kind of suspension of your moral responsibility toward the Other. And therefore, if you are going to be able to live in the land and at the same time be true to Torah, this must demand territorial compromise, because to hold on to as much land as possible, that involves a denial of the dignity of others and leads to a continued cycle of conflict that threatens you as well as threatening the Other, is against the most fundamental principles of Torah. So I have to find that language of argument.

Question: I want to bring to your attention the commonality between Islam, Christians, and Jews—the Abrahamic religions. For 1,400 years, we were partners. We worked together. Even Prophet Muhammad, when he took Christians and Jews under his arm when the Romans were trying to wipe them out. In the last fifty years, unfortunately, we are suffering on account of circumstances. We have many things common in our religion, and many things we all have the same. Our beliefs, our similarity, is very much practiced the same. We can marry each other without a change of religion. There are so many things, that we can eat with each other. We can even share our kosher food. Then why can't we today—Qur'an says to dialogue—and why can't we dialogue, from both sides, between the Muslims, Jews, and the Christians, and make this world paradise, because a double-headed monster in the future is going to come and wipe all of us out?

Answer: Thank you very much. I assume your question is rhetorical, and is purely reiterating my own comments, because, of course, I totally agree with you. What I sought to present is that it's precisely our fears in relation to our own identities that prevent us from behaving in the way we should.

Question: I'm Jean Donovan and I'm a Catholic theologian from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and my question to you is: Have we paid attention or sought out the goodwill of people that stand by and don't know how to help? I think of my daughter. She's seventeen and she reads the newspaper every day and, honestly, she truly cares about what's going on in the Middle East, and I had a whole class surrounded by young people that were wondering if they're going to have a life, and sometimes I say to myself, "How did we get to this point?" But, for the young people in the world or for ordinary folks in their towns and villages who wish us all well, who want a world of peace, I wonder whether fine people like you that are dialoguing on such high levels need to bring in ordinary people so that they can show the support that you need in order to finish the work that you are doing.

Answer: That's why I made reference to the ICCI and the plethora of organizations where grassroots people are engaged. All these different organizations are trying to work to make things better. That was also why I issued an appeal to all good people who care about others elsewhere to try and seek to support such initiatives and activities precisely where they do bring people together. One can go onto the Web site and find those. I mean, the ICCI is easy to remember—icci.org—and that's an umbrella organization. But I'm afraid I have no more wisdom than that. I'm sure you have as much as I do.

12

Religion and Science

Huston Smith

I want to begin by saluting Professor Arvind Sharma for having brought this important conference into being. Of all the people I know, I think of Arvind as the man who gets things done. I've seen that over the years and this is only the last evidence of it. I want to mention one other thing. I have not attended any session, not at all because of disinterest, but because I have had a cochlear implant last month, and I can only hear by lip reading now, and that does one no good at sessions like this. It can work one-on-one but but within two months I should be able to hear. This new development in hearing is not quite as good as spectacles for seeing, but still a great breakthrough. And by the end of the year, my hearing will be 95 percent normal without hearing aid. So I want to spread the word because there is a lot of deafness out there, and it's worth looking into.

Now, as we all know, the title, the subject, of this conference is World's Religions after September 11. However, there's something that was assumed but not stated, and the explicit full title would read World's Religions and Politics after September 11th. Because I go through this final schedule and I was going to see how many had politics mixed up in the title and included in the title and then I gave up counting because almost all of them had something about justice and equity and rights of various kinds. And that leads me to another kind of introductory thing. This, you may know, is the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. I suspect that I am the only survivor of those who were in that majestic hall that day. How did I make it? Well, as a gesture toward democracy, all the heads of state of the various countries filling this immense and stately auditorium, but up in the balcony, they reserved three rows for first come first get in, and I was a student at the University of California.

I got up and took the first bus from Berkeley to San Francisco 5 a.m. and I got in. And it was a thrilling event. I mean the hope that rang through that building. Finally, we are going to put war behind us and we will settle our differences through parliament or congresses. Now, fifty years later, I am a citizen of the United States and I am ashamed of the way that my administration and my country plainly brushed the United Nations aside and launched a unilateral war in Iraq, and I just feel I want to apologize for my country in doing that.

Now, to settle into the topic, my announced topic is Religion and Science. Now, logically, it's very interesting and very convenient, easy, to diagram it—two concentric circles, the smaller one labelled as science and the larger one as religion. That's the way it has always been up until modern times. The greatest historical divide in all of history is modernity and the premodern. Let me explain that. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, eastern Europe stumbled on a new way of knowing. We call it the scientific method and it introduced proof. Before that there could be speculations and arguments. But as the story has it—I'm not sure this is quite right—(if it pertains to) Galileo, (but)—it used to be thought the larger objects fell faster than smaller objects. So, he took—if it was Galileo, I'm not sure but—took a large canon ball and a small canon ball to the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and with a piece of wood pushed them over the edge at the same time and, what do you know, they both hit the ground at the same time. So much for the notion that larger objects fall faster than smaller. Now, this new way of knowing—proof—which retired false hypotheses and put in place their alternative—ones that were confirmed—and went on into laboratory experiment. This new way of knowing very quickly began to produce three great benefits. First, materials could be multiplied very quickly. The spinning mills of Birmingham practically ruined the economy of India where weaving was an important industry. Second, drudgery could be reduced—washing machines, microwaves, vacuum cleaners. Third, life expectancy could be extended. In all the countries that have been caught up in the scientific revolution, the age of life expectancy has risen very dramatically.

Now, these are not inconsiderable benefits—multiplication of goods, reduction of drudgery, extension of life. So we wrote science a blank cheque. If it had been a blank cheque for knowledge of the physical world, that would have been correct. We just were swept up in these benefits and fell for science hook, line and sinker, and that therein lay a very serious mistake, because science spins off of our physical senses. Very important but they are not the only senses we have. No one has ever seen a thought. No one has ever seen a feeling. And yet, though the world of our thoughts and feeling is the world that we are primarily involved with. Now, the upshot of this mistake was that those two circles that I began by saying the way to relate science and religion is science a small circle inside religion, a big circle. That has been reversed, and now we have religion as the small circle within science, the big circle. "Now, what's wrong with that?" you might say. It's that science can deal with only the ground floor of existence, our physical world, whereas religion can deal with other worlds. World is a very elastic word. I mean, we can say, "Oh, he lives in a small

village. It's a very small world." But it can be expanded to be the whole of everything that is. And because we have turned the field over to science as the reliable way of knowing, it has put religion in the shadow. And that is a disaster. Everyone of us at this conference is involved with religion. I wondered if in any of these innumerable papers, the question was raised "Why is religion important?" I suspect that it was not explicitly relayed and raised because we just take it for granted that religion is important. But that is not the way our secular scientistic society sees it. And so, religion is in the eclipse today, and it's worth raising the question.

Let's just think about this subject that has brought us together. Religio is Latin for rebinding. And religion involves belonging and, when that belonging has been sundered, then work toward rebinding it. And that rebinding occurs in three levels, one with the whole of thing. Rebinding. If you want to use the word God in whatsoever name, whatsoever idiom, it's reconciliation with the whole and with God. But it's also a reconciliation with people to one another. I just got word on my way over here of the tragic shooting that occurred today. The opposite of bonding is asundering. It's the splintering, and every society works toward the best possible rebinding of the people in that society through greater equality, greater justice. And then, there are face-to-face relationships. And religion—all of them—instructs that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who mourn.

Now I'm going to move, Mr. Chairman, into a conclusion that will take a little while, but it's a very clear indication of the way science has thrown religion into eclipse. I have a lifelong friend. He is a scientist at Penn State University and a world-class scientist. He founded and monitors the premier materials science laboratory in the world, and for the last year, the topic that has raged through the papers of the United States—I can't speak to the others—is the controversy between evolution and intelligent design. Did we come here by the survival of the fittest? Is that what brought us here? Or was there a mind behind it? And we tracked this practically everyday for about nine months. There was something on that in one op-ed or other. And the balance fell on evolution, not intelligent design. And then one morning, the telephone rang. And Rustrum—he was Indian, not American Indian, but Indian Indian—and Rustrum said, "Huston, we got to get in on this." And I said, "You're right. We do have to." So we batted out a statement and kept it short, just about one page, because that would increase the likelihood of it getting printed. And I can almost remember. This is how it went: "In this year-long controversy between evolution and intelligent design, there is one authority who we have not seen mentioned: Julius Caesar." Now, in journalism, that's known as a hook. You hook the reader because it's so absurd that he has to go on and find out what kind of justification. So, then, we quote, "Julius said that people tend to believe what they want to believe." And that's true. And then we went on to say, "This short piece on this subject is being co-written by a scientist and a historian of religion." By the way, in the end, we give our credentials. They're massive. I'll speak only to his, but I have a few too. Then we go on to say, "We believe in science. The fossil record

showed that it took 3.5 billion years to evolve from the smallest micro-organisms on this planet all the way up to homo sapiens, human beings. And that being true, we want to believe it. However, we also want to believe in religion, because no amount of survival of the fittest, natural selection, will produce—the Latin word is the imago dei—the image of God within us. Or we could cut through the jargon and say the spirit of God, which is the fundamental component of our being. And so, wanting to believe in both science and religion—we do believe in both science and religion—and believe that a little clear thinking will show this year-long controversy as a tempest in a teapot." Now, I'm not through. We kept it short, sent it to the *New York Times* op-ed. No response. *Wall Street Journal,* no response. *Washington Post,* no response. *Los Angeles Times,* no response. And then we moved now into the news magazine that had also been covering it. Ten submissions. Zero response. And then Rustrum and I said, "We could spent our year just spinning our wheel trying to get some substantial journal to publish this." So we gave up.

But let me remind you, the only submission by true people, a scientist and religionists, were the only one they wouldn't touch. What does that tell us about our society? It's clear that the media or the intelligentsia don't want to hear a good word for religion. Of course, religion is all over the map, but what kind? George W. Bush's kind. And the fundamentalists, yes. That's all over the map. But for the intelligentsia and their paper and their television program, no. That is the situation we are in. I do not want to end on a totally despondent note. The good thing about mistakes is when they are discovered, they can be corrected. And I think we are seeing some glimmering in those who are on the frontier of the intelligentsia's media that this mistake is being discovered and that would open the way to its being corrected.

Questions and Answers

Question: I would like to ask you about your recent reaction to this so-called ID—intelligent design. Do you think that this is a way that is open for the future of the relationship between science and religion?

Answer: Oh yes! I do. Needless to say, we thought we had it just right and everybody else for a whole year had missed it. But it's going to take a little time for the mistake—the mistake, however, mind you, is making science the big circle and religion the smaller one—it's going to take some time for that to seep down, especially into the masses. I think the best thinkers at the frontier are acknowledging this a little bit cautiously, but they are raising that possibility.

Question: Do you think this question of intelligent design is really something that brings us forward in the relation between science and religion, and the notion of God, for instance?

Answer: Well, if I heard correctly, intelligent implies an intelligent being, and one that could orchestrate all these things is another word for a divine being.

Question: What is the best scientific hope for intelligent design? DNA, consciousness, or. . . .

Answer: Well, DNA I do not know very much about. And I'm not sure that anyone really sees the full implication of that. Consciousness, I don't think. . . Oh, it is, and this is important. It opens another subject, because science deals only with matter. It has assumed and led us to believe that matter is the fundamental reality in the universe. Now, I don't have time here, but if I did, I think I could prove to you that that's just an assumption and it is not true. Consciousness is the fundamental reality. But we can take a leap from the notebook of the scientist on this point, because they say matter—and remember, in their opinion, the fundamental reality—cannot be destroyed. It can be changed from corporeality to energy, and then back from energy to corporeality. But you can't destroy it. Now, if you can't destroy the most fundamental reality when it is matter, the same holds for consciousness, and it cannot be destroyed. And to my mind, this is a knockdown proof that life, when it drops the body, as the Indians say, that is not the end. The light on the television screen stays on. Of course, nobody has any idea what image it will be on the television screen, but the light will still be on.

Question: In this age, the polarity of science and religion seems to be moving instead when absorption of sorts of religion by science. That is, science is now being called a religion in and of itself. Is science, as a religion, any less valuable than traditional religion, in your opinion?

Answer: I think my answer is going to be yes, but. . . Well, that's playing pretty fast and loose with the word religion. You can be very elastic and say your religion is what you really believe in. And if so, why, sure, for dyed-in-the-wood will scientists, it is their religion. But I think that's playing fast and loose with words.

Question: Your model of concentric circles suggests that science should be a subset of religion. But do they really overlap in the questions they seek to answer? In other words, doesn't science answer "what," "where," "when," and "how," while religion seeks to answer "why"?

Answer: Well, I didn't absorb the first part, but the last part sounds right, science answering "what," "where," "when," and "how"—space, time, and matter—the three rubrics of science. Yes, but why? The author of this is exactly right. It cannot give any reason why.

Question: As a historian of religion, can you please comment briefly on the way different religions of the world, or major spokespersons of these religions, relate to science?

Answer: It's mostly historical, because in premodern and some parts of the world are still in that state. They don't brush up against religion. But where they have. . . . Well, there are opinions all over the map, but I think when they move beyond opinions to thought—calculated and carefully thought-through thought—they come out in the same place.

Question: If you have to summarize your thesis about why religion matters, what would you say?

Answer: Ok, that's good. It matters because after the physical needs of the body are met—food, shelter—it is the most important component in life, for giving us orientation, for giving us hope, for giving us compassion.

Question: A question regarding your joint submission to the media you talked about—Could the lack of response from the media to your submission be a reflection of how you approached the media and not the media's agenda to steer clear of religion?

Answer: Well, it's always possible. But I'm at a loss. How should we have approached the media? It seems to me that we were courteous, we stated our opinion which was our job to submit to them, and so, well, that's my answer. I cannot understand that they could have been offset by how. . . .

Question: I was asked to answer a question that I have no answer to, because I find it evident and clear for myself. Why do we need to believe?

Answer: Interesting. What is the alternative to believing? Skepticism. But you cannot live a totally skeptical life. You have to believe. When every time we take a step, we believe that the floor or the platform will support us. Every time we wake up in the morning, we believe that the basic fixtures of the world will not have changed overnight. So, that's my answer. Unbelief, disbelief, skepticism is an unlivable philosophy.

Question: Do you believe God is supreme intelligence?

Answer: Yes and yes. Yes, my definition of God is: List all the virtues you can think of—creativity, kindness, compassion, truth, beauty, goodness, such as another. List them all and then draw a line from each of those up to a point at the top, and the ascent of the lines means that each virtue is gaining in degree as it ascends. And if I want to play this analogy one point further, that final point in which all these virtues to the maximum that we can conceive and, even beyond that, converge—it's like a mathematical point. It has no space at all. And that puts it outside the space-time world, which is where God is.

13

Panel Discussion: World's Religions, Human Rights, and Same-Sex Marriage

Panelists: Brent Hawkes, Janet Epp Buckingham, Douglas Elliott, and Margaret Somerville

Brent Hawkes

I'm here partly because of my thirty years of involvement in gay and lesbian human rights movement here in Canada, and as pastor of a church in Toronto that has a special ministry to the gay and lesbian community, and that has also been at the forefront for rights for gays and lesbians. We see a trend throughout the world in many of the world's religions, gay and lesbian participants no longer being satisfied with being pushed out of those religions, but wanting to reclaim their opportunity to be part of those faith traditions, to celebrate their spirituality while celebrating their sexuality. The difficulty has been that for many of our traditional religions, our viewpoints are based on ancient scriptures, ancient texts, when very little was known about homosexuality. And some of the biases and the ignorance of that era have been brought into modern times and the religions of today.

More specifically, I'm here because of the work that our church has done around the issue of equal marriage. We were the first church to have legally recognized the weddings of same-sex male and female couples on January 14, 2001. A very short history: Through the publication of bannas, the Ontario Marriage Act says that any two persons can be married, and so on January 14, we had those ceremonies. The government refused to recognize them and refused to register them, so we took them to court. We won the original court case, then we won the appeal, and then the federal government decided not to appeal that to the Supreme Court, and ultimately our Parliament affirmed those decisions.

Since then, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Massachusetts, and soon, South Africa will have put in law the recognition of same-sex marriage. And here in Canada, we're supported by the largest Protestant denomination, the United Church of Canada, by the Unitarian congregations, and by Hebrew Rabbis among others.

When one religion tries to take its perspective and restrict the rights of other religions then we get into great difficulty. And as an example of that difficulty, that is a bulletproof vest that I had to wear by order of the police when I performed those marriages in 2001. I happen to own it because I've had to wear it on a number of occasions. This is what we do to each other. Seventeen of our churches have been burned to the ground.

The movement for the rights of gays and lesbians in Canada has seen two groups opposed consistently. The public opinion polls tell us that one group is made up of people who say they don't know anyone who are gay and lesbian. And as that group has declined over the years, as gay people have come out, then support for our causes has risen. What has remained constant is the opposition based on religious reasons. One of the leading legalistic Protestants, Brian Stiller, said in an article that the law in society has two purposes. One is to confine behavior—don't steal. The second is to be instructive in society—stealing is bad. And fundamentalists want the law to say homosexuality is bad. And they have wanted that at every level. The idea that our civil laws should reflect a specific religious viewpoint is scary, and this idea leads to state-sanctioned tyranny of beliefs. We should, all of us, be scared, because it means the majority religious view in any one country could dictate public policy against all other minorities. In the movement toward equal marriage in Canada, we've not been asking any faith tradition, any denomination, to make any changes. Indeed, we have sought to protect the right of denominations and clergy who do not wish to perform equal marriage to have the protection that they not be forced to do so. So while we are trying to expand equal rights to include our religious perspectives, at the same time, we're trying to protect the rights of others who disagree with us.

Homosexuality has been viewed by Dr. Boivert and others as the last acceptable hatred by religions. We have recently seen one rare example of religious leaders in the city of Jerusalem come together and make a joint statement. Very rarely does that happen. But recently they did so to condemn a pride celebration in the city of Jerusalem. And a reward was offered—not by the religious leaders—for the killing of a gay person who came to that parade. Fortunately, no killings occurred. Two thousand gay and lesbian people have been executed in Iran since 1979 purely for religious reasons. And there have been killings and bashings here in North America, spurred on by the religious right. The Declaration for Human Rights that has been drafted for the world religions is a wonderful, wonderful step in the right direction. And I would hope that we would be able to find a way to disagree theologically on issues, to disagree on public positions, but that we might find a way to do that which doesn't lead to bulletproof vests, that doesn't lead to the denial of human rights, that we could

be secure enough in our own religious perspectives that we can allow others who differ from us to be able to have their place as well, and that the civil laws of our land would not reflect one religious perspective to the exclusion of others. Thank you.

Janet Epp Buckingham

Marriage is one of those complex institutions that is both deeply religious and yet is often recognized by the State. In Canada, as in a lot of other countries, not all, but in many countries, it's a shared responsibility between the Church or other religious institutions and the State. Seventy-five percent of marriages in Canada are solemnized by clergy, so clearly it is considered a deeply religious institution. It wasn't very many years ago when the Church was actually the institution that solemnized all marriages. And if you wanted to go back and track your ancestry and find birth and death certificates, it could only be done through churches. Now, the State has taken on more responsibility on the issue of marriage, which makes us realize how complex this issue is, when we're saying, "What's the State's responsibility for marriage and what is religion's responsibility for marriage?"

The issue of the definition of marriage, and therefore, the nature of marriage, has been debated in Canada for over a decade. It has been an extremely divisive debate and I can tell you that there are wounded souls on both sides of the issue. In essence, the debate really narrowed down to two possible definitions of marriage and only one could ultimately predominate. The first definition is the one recognized around the world. Until recently, when someone said to you they were married, it was a given that it was a person of the opposite sex, whether you were Hindu or Muslim or Christian or atheist or any other of the world's religions. If you were married it was to someone of the opposite sex. This definition of marriage has deep roots in religion and culture. Underlying this understanding of marriage is the recognition that marriage has the expectation of children. Indeed, until about the 1960s, there was little one could do to prevent children resulting from marriage. This is not to denigrate childless marriages, but simply to recognize that we make public policy on norms, not on the exceptions. The understanding of marriage as being at the root of families and the raising of children has important implications for how marriage is nurtured and sustained in a culture. Now marriage is understood to involve sacrifice, both sacrifice for one's spouse and sacrifice for the benefit of one's children. Marriage, as historically understood, does not necessarily involve romantic love. Indeed, in many cultures until even now, marriages are still arranged by parents for their children. Marriage is an alliance for the future of the children, and the future of that family.

Much of this has changed in the West. You must understand that to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples requires that one first redefine the understanding of marriage. Marriage is about the two people involved. It does not necessarily involve the bearing and raising of children. In fact, when this

issue came before the courts in Canada, the judges ruled that it was abhorrent to say that marriage involved procreation or that it was an important incident of marriage. In this understanding of marriage, it is about affirming the loving, committed relationship between two adults. This means that to exclude any loving, committed couple from marriage is discriminatory and offensive. This understanding of marriage has important implications for how marriage is nurtured and sustained in the culture. If it is about recognizing and affirming romantic love, does this mean the State has a responsibility to encourage ongoing romance? Does it necessitate easy divorce laws so that couple who no longer have romantic feelings for one another can separate and divorce? It raises issues about the State's interest in marriage.

During the debate and discussion on the definition of marriage, I was asked over and over again, "How would this change your marriage to include same-sex couples in the definition of marriage? How could making marriage more inclusive harm the institution?" The answer is that redefining marriage has huge implications for how it is nurtured and sustained in the culture. If it is nurtured in its traditional or historic form, it is sustained as the foundation for the raising of children. It is family-centered. But if it is nurtured in its new form, it is about the couple, and that is very different. In Canada, we have seen the implications very clearly of the impact on those who hold to the historic definition of marriage once marriage is redefined. Because some of us continue—and I speak for many in the evangelical Christian community—because we continue to recognize marriage as an institution between a man and a woman in a family-centered way and refuse to recognize the new definition in our communities, we are marginalized. This is very serious and I consider it the biggest threat to religious freedom in Canada.

Recently, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a U.S.-based religious liberty organization, held a symposium on the impact on religious freedom of changing the definition of marriage. They included academics from both sides of the debate. Interestingly, it was academics who supported same-sex marriage who anticipated the most serious impact on religious freedom. These academics view those of us who hold to a traditional view as being the same as racists. Therefore, they would support restrictions on our views of marriage and on our ability to communicate these views in public. Some of the restrictions they foresee include refusal of government funding, tax benefits, and even building permits for religious institutions that refuse to recognize same-sex marriage if it is legalized.

Let me share with you briefly some of the legal issues that have arisen in Canada in the aftermath of the redefinition of marriage. A Catholic men's club faced a legal challenge after refusing to rent their hall to a lesbian couple for a wedding reception. A Catholic bishop faced a legal challenge—in Canada it is called a human rights complaint—for what he said in a pastoral letter on issue related to homosexual practice and same-sex marriage. A Christian teacher and a Christian university professor have both been disciplined for comments made and published outside the classroom on related issues. Civil officials

who solemnize nonreligious marriages have been required to solemnize same-sex marriage or they lose their jobs. School curricula are been revised to reflect the new definition of marriage. Teachers have been told they may not opt out of this material. Parents and students have similarly been told that they may not opt out of classes where this material is being taught. Dr. Somerville—I don't believe she's going to mention this, so I will—Dr. Somerville personally experienced, when she was awarded an honorary doctorate at Ryerson University, a campaign to marginalize her for her views on same-sex marriage. She was protested against and some of the professors turned their backs on her when she was given an honorary doctoral award. These examples are not all directly related to the definition of marriage but it's been a factor in the marginalization of the voices of people of faith.

When this issue was being debated in Canada, those from the religious communities who raised alarm bells about this and the potential infringement of our rights were assured that these kinds of issues will not arise. We were told that this was not about enforcing one view of marriage. We were told there would be room in our society for more than one view of marriage. But as we expected, this has not been the case. When the definition of marriage is changed, it follows that the State will enforce and reinforce the new definition of marriage. This seems to necessitate restricting and restraining those who hold to the previous and near-universal definition of marriage.

I think it's clear to everyone that there's a wide variety of religious expression. Some hold to a fairly strict interpretation of their sacred texts. Some are more free and liberal with their interpretation. I do not believe this body, this conference, would argue—and I hope that no one in this room would argue—that those who hold to a more strict interpretation are wrong and should face sanctions in society for holding their views. Evangelical Christians, for example, who number approximately 420 million worldwide, hold to the Bible as the authority in life for faith and religious practice. We derive our understanding of marriage from the Creation narratives, from references in the Old Testament, from the words of Jesus Christ, and subsequent instruction from the apostles. These point us to marriage as a monogamous, lifelong union between one man and one woman. All would point to this as our common understanding of marriage. This being a given, we cannot and will not deviate from this definition of marriage and we cannot adopt a different definition of marriage. We will not accept polygamy, we do not accept those who live together in common law unions, and we will not accept same-sex marriage. We do not accept our children being indoctrinated into this new view of marriage and society will try to enforce it on our children. We do not accept being marginalized and being called homophobic and bigots because we espouse certain views about marriage. We will not allow our facilities to be used to celebrate marriage that we do not recognize. Should we, then, face discrimination? The same reasoning that I have just explained for evangelical Christians also applies to Roman Catholics, most Muslims, and many other religious traditions. The implication of changing the definition of marriage is to exclude and marginalize

those religious groups who hold to traditional views on marriage. This includes not only my religious tradition but many, many others. One cannot endorse changing the definition of marriage without recognizing the serious implications for the marginalization of minority, and sometimes even majority, religious groups. Thank you.

Douglas Elliott

Marriage is a legal institution and the right to marry is a legal question. That is so withstanding that marriage is a religious institution in many faiths. The issue of same-sex marriage does raise profound questions about the relationship between the law and religion and about the role of the law in regulating marriage. It will be my contention in these brief remarks that the optimal legal regime is one that permits same-sex couples to marry under the same laws that recognize the right of opposite-sex couples to marry. The historical record makes it clear that the law has been used in the past to improperly restrict access to marriage based on the enforcement of the majority's religious values, at times allied with pseudoscientific notions of the public good. Laws restricting same-sex marriage arose out of traditional religious rules that should not be used to justify restrictions on the liberty of adults to choose their marriage partners in the civil law system in the twenty-first century. There are no compelling reasons other than religious ones to justify such restrictions.

Religion and law operate in overlapping but distinct spheres, as reflected in Jesus Christ's famous injunction to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. In the European systems that are the foundation of the laws of Canada and many other countries, the Roman Catholic Church was once the exclusive regulator of marriage. However, beginning with Henry VIII in England and with the French Revolution in France, both the common law and civil law systems have either recognized the supremacy of the State in regulating marriage in the one case, or its exclusive power to regulate marriage in the other. Accordingly, the exclusion of the Pope from control over the legal institution of marriage did not arise recently, nor in the context of same-same marriage. It is in fact a matter of great antiquity. There's a historic pattern of the State, however, granting special rights to the religious majority in matters of marriage. In this province, under French rule, Protestant marriages did not exist legally. Only Catholic marriages were legally recognized. Similarly, in my home province of Ontario, at one time, only Protestant marriages were legally recognized. Catholic marriages were meaningless to the State, let alone Jewish, Muslim, and other non-Christian marriages.

Most people today would agree that this kind of religious discrimination has no place in the marriage laws of any modern democracy. Marriage laws should respect human rights, freedom of religion, and the dignity of allowing every adult to choose whom to marry based on their own religious beliefs, if any. Laws banning interracial marriage were historically similarly grounded on the social majority's religious notions. In a case decided in the 1960s, *Loving v. Virginia,*

the Virginia court reflected traditional views about God, marriage, and race when it said the following: "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents, and but for the interference with His arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that He separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix." In the case of racial discrimination in marriage, science was also enlisted as an ally, genetics in particular. It was argued that interracial marriages would be bad for children and society because these unions would produce so-called mongrel children that would be genetically inferior. Once again, today I doubt many Christians would share those religious beliefs reflected in those judges' remarks, nor would many scientists propound those particular views on genetics.

This concept that the religious values of the majority should control the legal institution of marriage informs the common law rule that has been used in many countries, and until recently, in Canada, to limit marriage to opposite-sex couples. It was pronounced back in 1866, in the case of *Hyde v. Hyde,* pronounced by a judge, not by a parliament. The issue before the court in Hyde was Mormon polygamy, not same-sex marriage. The court was effectively trying to determine whether Mormon marriage was Christian marriage, and thereby entitled to recognition under the law, or whether it was some type of infidel marriage that did not warrant legal recognition. The decision was made to refuse to recognize Mormon marriage as Christian marriage, and therefore, legal marriage. This is reflected in the language of the key passage in the ruling as follows: "What then is the nature of this institution, marriage, as understood in Christendom? It be of common acceptance in existence. It must need to have some pervading identity and universal basis." I concede that marriage, as understood in Christendom, may for this purpose be defined as the voluntary union for life for one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others. I note in passing that there was nothing in this definition that required a willingness or ability to procreate. That was never a condition of either Christian marriage or legal marriage.

On Canada's same-sex marriage statute, our Supreme Court made the following observations about this historic legacy and the need for a modern approach to the issue: "The reference to Christendom is telling. Hyde spoke to a society of shared social values where marriage and religion were thought to be inseparable. This is no longer the case. Canada is a pluralistic society. Marriage, from the perspective of the State, is a civil institution."

Both Church and State, of course, for centuries condemned homosexual acts. There's a diversity of religious views on the question among and within religions today. However, there's a somewhat greater consensus on how to approach the problem legally, at least with respect to the criminal law. Most democratic states do not criminalize homosexual acts, and there's a principle of equal treatment for gays and lesbians that is recognized under international law. However, there is a greater diversity of views on the question of marriage. It's certainly clear from our two religious panelists there's in fact a diversity of

views about whether same-sex marriage should be permitted in the religious context.

In modern states that respect human rights, the State should not choose sides in such religious debates. In my view, that result can best be achieved by having laws that permit religious organizations that wish to perform same-sex marriages to do so, while ensuring that those object to such unions can never be compelled to marry same-sex couples within their religious institutions. This is the legal approach that has served many societies well, including our own, in a context of other religious rules regarding marriage, notably, the rule that many faiths have, that they will only marry two persons who are members in good standing of their own faith communities. And I'll note at this point that in the cases that were argued in Ontario, our Church was advocating religious freedom, including the protection of the religious freedom of the churches with which Ms. Buckingham is involved, and it was their organization that was asking the court to restrict our religious freedom to perform same-sex marriages. Rules based simply on the enforcement of one group's religious precepts on another cannot be justified. However, sometimes rules that have their origins in religion can be justified on some other or different grounds today.

So the question arises apart from religious objections. Are there other grounds for supporting the restriction of marriage to opposite-sex couple? I know from her previous pronouncements that an answer will be offered by my old friend Margaret Somerville, that it is in the best interest of children to justify this restriction, and that we must privilege the best interest of children over the choices of adults. Her argument goes that restricting marriage to opposite-sex couples is justified because it promotes the symbolic ideal that the best environment for raising children is generally in the context of biological married opposite-sex parents. In my view, Margo is wrong in fact, in principle and in law.

Factually, the leading study on this point, that is, how do children do in same-sex households, as compared to opposite-sex households, is the comprehensive survey of all such studies done by Stacy and Dillards that was filed in a Canadian marriage litigation. The authors conclude that the children of same-sex parents do just as well as those raised by opposite-sex couples. But you needn't take my word for it. Their views on this point have been accepted by all the Canadian courts and by all major professional organizations working in this field, such as the American Psychiatric Association.

In principle, we must recognize that marriage has legally never been connected to any ability or willingness to procreate, when it comes to heterosexuals. People who are beyond the age of procreation have always been permitted to marry. We have never barred heterosexuals from marrying because they might create a home environment that we perceive to be less than ideal, such as parents who smoke or parents who are poor. Further, there's simply no logical connection between the decision of heterosexuals to marry and procreate and the restriction on same-sex marriage. In my own informal survey, including an associate of mine who recently married a woman, I have

yet to meet any straight couple that has asserted that they would not marry, or would not have children, because same-sex couples are now allowed to marry. To suggest otherwise strikes me as a bizarre comment on the behavior of straight couples. Finally, unless unmarried couples, straight or gay, are to be forbidden to procreate and adopt, the people who would really suffer by refusing to recognize same-sex marriage are the children in nontraditional relationships, gay and straight. Those children will be legally and socially stigmatized by the Somerville approach that seeks to privilege the children of married, opposite-sex couples.

Finally, there's no legal justification for this concern. Our law has never confused the rules relating to marriage and the rules relating to raising children. Our laws recognize that not all parent-child relationships are the product of married, opposite-sex couples. The irony of Margo's position is that it is only same-sex couples that must generally involve the adoption process and, therefore, have to satisfy a court that it is in a child's best interest that they become parents. This is in stark contrast to straight couples who can reproduce no matter how patently unfit they may be to be parents. And we know that the biological tie between parent and child has not prevented some of the worst possible behavior, including sexual assault and murder. Finally, if procreation were to be the touchstone of marriage, then legal equality would logically require opposite-sex couples who are sterile, or unwilling to reproduce, to not be allowed to marry and that contraception would be mandatory for unmarried heterosexual couples. Naturally, divorce would be out.

I believe these examples illustrate how preposterous it is to restrict the liberty of same-sex couples to marry in the interest of promoting some notion of the best interest of children. Laws that permit same-sex marriage but do not require religions that object to perform same-sex marriages respect freedom of religion and individual autonomy. I completely support the right of the churches that Janet represents to refuse to marry same-sex couples and, indeed, to preach that homosexuality is sinful.

History teaches us that when government gets into the business of enforcing religious rules, great harm results. When a state imposes a religious rule, it can only pick one. Even religious faiths that do not support same-sex marriage within their faiths should, in my view, support civil laws that do permit same-sex marriage. Why? Because this underlines the principle of religious diversity that protects all faiths from the imposition by the State of the rules of other faiths. The old restriction on same-sex marriage was clearly based on religious rules and there's no legitimate other ground for the exclusion. Contrary to what Ms. Buckingham has said, in my view, nothing bad has happened in the countries that have permitted same-sex marriage. She has selected a few instances where challenges have been made to those who have discriminated against gays and lesbians, but in my view, those cases have nothing to do with the recognition of same-sex marriage. And in fact, if you look at our case law, and particularly the case of Trinity Western University that I know Janet is very familiar with, and the same-sex marriage case itself, it's very clear that in

Canada our courts have gone to great lengths to try and strike a balance between the rights of evangelical Christians in particular within their own sphere to have some freedom to reflect their religious beliefs, while at the same time protecting gays and lesbians from discrimination in the public sphere. In short, the prophecies of doom that we heard about what would happen in Canada is we recognize same-sex marriage have simply not materialized. Heterosexuality remains remarkably popular in this country. The joy of family weddings has simply been extended to everyone. Thank you.

Margaret Somerville

My colleague, Douglas Elliott, has introduced what I'm going to say, so you might save me a few minutes, Douglas. I'm the attorney for the case of children's rights, and particularly children's human rights. Seeing that this is a conference that has as one of its goals to try to articulate how religions and human rights interact and coalesce, I would very much urge you to consider children's human rights. This is the latest edition of the *McGill Law Journal,* which arrived on my desk yesterday. It contains an article called "Children's and Parent's Rights" by Barbara Bennett Woodhouse in which she proposes "Children and juveniles are the latest kids on the human rights block." Until I read this article, which I did just this morning, I hadn't realized why it was so hard to get the issue of children's rights into the marriage debate in Canada—it was almost impossible. The breach of children's rights that same-sex marriage involves is my only objection to same-sex marriage.

I don't have a problem with homosexuality—I think it's absolutely wrong to discriminate against gay people. But I do believe that we have a conflict in the same-sex marriage debate between homosexual people's human rights against discrimination and children's human rights with respect to their parents and the family structure in which they're brought up. And so my colleague Douglas Elliott said that marriage laws should respect human rights. I totally agree with him. But that must include what those laws need to be if they are to respect children's human rights. He also said there's no compelling reasons other than religious ones to reject same-sex marriage. Well, the reason that I reject it has got nothing to do with religion. I reject it on a secular, biological-family-rights-of-children, needs-of-children base. So let's go to the position I take on same-sex marriage, because we're going to have to go fairly quickly for me to set out the arguments that I want to make to you.

The first question we need to ask is: What's the purpose of marriage as a societal institution? To answer we must take into account a crucial point: Under both national and international law, marriage is a compound right. It's not just the right of adults to marry whom they want. It's the right to marry *and to found a family.* And that latter right establishes both parents' rights with respect to their children, and children's rights with respect to their parents. So that question means we have to ask ourselves: Should biology continue to matter to marriage? And that translates into yet another question: Should biology

continue to matter to parenthood? I believe that the needs and rights of children, in general—of course, we're going to have to deal with individual children where it's not possible for them to be with their biological parents and raised in their biological family—but the needs and rights of children, in general, mean that we should continue to have as our societal norm that norm established by monogamous opposite-sex marriage, namely, that children have a right to know who their biological parents are and, if at all possible, to be brought up within their biological family. And why is that norm important? Because we need general principles—values and norms—that protect the transmission of life to the next generation and nurture that life in the best possible conditions, until the child becomes independent. That's what I believe marriage has always primarily been about. The adults are really secondary beneficiaries of the institution of marriage; its primary beneficiaries are intended to be the children born into the marriage—above all else, marriage is meant to be for the protection of the transmission of human life to ensure that there is a next generation. Now that view is regarded in Canada at present, and I'm regarded, as quaint, old-fashioned, out-of-date, and, as Janet mentioned, a bigot, and hateful. There have been all sorts of suggestions by advocates of same-sex marriage as to what should be done with me, including that I should be sent back to Australia where I was born.

So let me explain what I'm on about here. I believe there's a biological reality at the core of opposite-sex marriage, namely the natural procreative relationship between a man and a woman, and opposite-sex marriage recognizes, symbolizes, and institutionalizes that relationship. It sets up an institution that gives children their rights with respect to their parents and family structure based on their links to their biological parents. The problem with same-sex marriage is not that it's between two homosexuals; it's that it eliminates that biological reality from marriage. It directly and overtly contravenes it and wipes it out as the norm and, in doing that, it negates the rights of all children to contact and connection with their biological parents, and to being reared by them within their own biological family structure. And it wipes out those rights, not just for individual children, but on a societal level; and not just for children in a same-sex marriage, but for all children. It also wipes out those rights for children who later on become gay adults, as well as for children who later on become heterosexual adults—I believe all children need a mother and a father, preferably their own biological parents, and have a right to know who those parents and, therefore, they, themselves, are. Douglas raised the question of infertile, opposite-sex couples or ones who don't want children, why doesn't that have the same effect of negating children's rights in these respects. The reason is that those are individual cases, not a norm, and those situations, unlike same-sex marriage don't overtly contravene the societal level norm, values, and symbolism established by opposite-sex marriage, and that's why they do not create the same problem.

We can also look at parenthood from another angle, and this is actually explicit in our new Canadian Civil Marriage Act. In Canada, we'd always

defined parent as the "natural parent." That was the term, used in our federal legislation. The Civil Marriage Act changed the word from "natural" to "legal"—in other words, the parental bond between parents and children is no longer defined by biological links, but is now defined by the law and who it declares as the parents—the natural reality of biological parenthood no longer counts. So the fundamental nature of the primary bond has been radically changed. What that change effectuates is to implement genderless parenting. The arguments in favor of that are based on a belief that it doesn't matter to children whether their parents are two men, two women, or a man and a woman. In making that change we reverse the basic presumption that as a society we work from a basic presumption—a norm—that children's parents are their natural parents, to which exceptions must be justified. Rather we replace it with a basic presumption that a child's parents are simply who the law says they are. Now, apart from anything else, that directly contravenes a provision in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the most ratified convention in the history of the United Nations, and which Canada has ratified. (Only two countries in the world, the United States and Somalia, have not ratified that convention.) That convention provides that children have a basic right to be raised in their own family and to know who their parents are.

So, what we have here is a conflict of two claims. That's what same-sex marriage presents us with, a conflict between the rights of same-sex adults to have their relationship, as they want it to be, recognized legally as marriage, and to have the public recognition that would engender that it's wrong to discriminate against them—creating that message is the power of same-sex marriage to correct past wrongs of discrimination against homosexual people. It gives a very strong message in that regard. But that goal is achieved at the expense of breaching the fundamental human rights of children with respect to their parents. So we have to make a choice. I believe the choice we should make comes closest to having the best of both worlds, that of upholding rights against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and that of respecting children's rights with respect to their biological families and family structure. I support gay rights to equal treatment with heterosexual people with respect to their intimate relationships and I agree completely that the horrible discrimination against gay people in the past must be decried and never occur again. But I propose we can achieve those goals without breaching children's fundamental human rights through legal recognition of civil unions between same-sex couples rather than marriage. Civil unions do not affect children's rights because unlike marriage, which is a compound right—the right to marry *and found a family*—they carry no such right. Civil unions, however, have been rejected by the gay community in Canada, as instituting what they call second-class citizenship.

I want now to touch on some avant-garde issues that same-sex marriage raises with respect to children's human rights with respect to their biological families and family structure. Because same-sex marriage unlinks the biological bonds between parents and children as the basis for defining parenthood and who constitute a family, it brings in the whole area of new reproductive

technologies an area which I study with respect to the ethics and law which should govern it.

If you look at the literature, up until very recently, when we talked about new reproductive technologies—and I've been working in this area for nearly thirty years—we were always concerned with the physical health of the child whom we brought into existence. But that was almost the only matter that we were concerned about. Now we're starting to realize that there are a whole lot of other matters that we also have to be concerned about.

So, what should children's rights be, first of all with respect to know who are their parents, which we've been talking about, but also the way in which they are conceived, or what we can call their "coming into being"? I suggest that one way we can approach this is through a concept of "anticipated consent." That means that we must ask ourselves: Is what we're going to do to these children, something that we can reasonably anticipate they would consent to when they're old enough to know and understand what we did? I believe that some of the things that we're now able to do to them, they would not consent to. In fact we already know that many people who were brought into being, for example, through gamete donation—donated sperm or donated ova—are now forming groups—they call themselves "donor-conceived adults"—and they adamantly believe that society did a very serious wrong to them in allowing them to come into existence through the technology that was used to conceive them.

So what I propose is that, in light of all these developments, we need to recognize new human rights for children. And I propose that the rights that children, in general, should have include, first, a right to know the identity of their biological parents. They also have a right to both a mother and a father, preferably their own biological parents. Further, they have a right to be raised by those parents, unless an exception can be justified as in best interests of a particular child, as in many adoptions. And they have the right to be conceived with a natural, biological heritage, that is, from an untampered-with-ovum from one identified, adult, living woman and an untampered-with-sperm from one, identified, living adult man.

Now, I would like to explain how same-sex marriage, because it carries the right to found a family, would contravene all of those rights of children. In unlinking marriage from biological parenthood, same-sex marriage contravenes the first two rights. And because same-sex marriage carries the right to found a family—indeed, in the Ontario Court of Appeal case that Douglas Elliott referred to, the judges ruled that "if procreation is important to marriage, [they thought it wasn't, as he said] there's no problem for same-sex couples, because they can use new reproductive technologies to make themselves procreative." That means that same-sex marriage could be seen as endorsing certain uses of new reproductive technologies—for instance, surrogate motherhood—that many people see as unethical and in breach of children's human rights.

In giving same-sex couples the right to found a family, same-sex marriage takes away children's right to both a mother and a father. So another central issue it raises is: Does it matter whether a child has a mother and a father?

Mr. Elliott referred to research that says that it really doesn't matter, children without a parent of each sex are not disadvantaged. That research is highly challengeable. Even two prominent gay researchers, William Mason and Jonathan Roach, recently put out a report that said, at best, the jury is out on that evidence. Also, for anyone who is really interested in this issue, there is a very long and comprehensive new report on it commissioned by the French government, which rejected same-sex marriage for France precisely on the basis that it would be contrary to respecting children's rights and fulfilling their needs to set up same-sex parenting in the way that same-sex marriage would do. In fact, if we want a general, ethical principle that leads to the same conclusion, we can take the precautionary principle that's used in environmental ethics and law. That requirement says that when we're really uncertain about some great social experiment—and same-sex marriage is a great social experiment—we should err on the side of caution, which means keeping the status quo until deviating from it can be shown to be justified.

Now, children's rights to know the identity of their biological parents is increasingly being recognized in the law of all countries. For instance, the United Kingdom has recently passed laws to that effect. The result of prohibiting gamete donor anonymity is that people are not as willing to donate. Sometimes an argument against requiring donor identification is that many children do not know who their biological father is. But that situation arising by chance differs ethically from it's being created through choice. There's a major difference ethically between a woman getting pregnant and not know who the father was, so the child doesn't know, and society setting up systems that condone that situation and accommodate it within the societal norm, which is what we're talking about here. There's a very big difference between respecting people's right to reproductive privacy in the former situation, and, as in the latter situation, providing people with positive technological assistance to help them to create, what these children sometimes call themselves, "genetic orphans."

I want to go now to perhaps the most startling situation opened up by same-sex marriage with respect to children's human rights—the right to come into being from natural human origins. Amazing new technologies on the horizon raise a question that we've never had to face before: Does a child have a right to a natural, biological heritage, that is, a right to untampered with biological origins? These technologies include, as well as cloning, which you've probably seen lots of discussion about, making it possible for two men to have their own genetically shared baby or for two women to do so. And the reason is we can now make sperm or ova from adult stem cells. There was a report in *Nature,* yesterday, about Japanese scientists creating a mouse embryo from two female mice. What we can do using our science in animals, down the line we can usually also do in humans. And that would mean you would be able to have your own shared genetic baby, even if you were two men or two women. It also means, and even more bizarrely in a way, that you could have your own baby that wasn't your clone. If you were a woman, scientists could take one of your ova, make a sperm from one of your stem cells, and fertilize the ovum with that

sperm. There would be recombination of the chromosomes present in that embryo, and so you'd have a new human life which came only from you, but is not your clone, because there would have been rearrangement of all the genetic material.

Such extraordinary new technoscience possibilities mean that we need new legal and ethical protections. And one of those, I propose, is that we must recognize as the most fundamental human right of all, namely, that every human being who comes into existence has a right to do so from natural untampered with biological origins, that is, from an untampered-with-ovum from one identified, living, adult woman and an untampered-with-sperm from one, identified, living, adult man.

The word living excludes using postmortem gamete donation. To conceive a child knowing that it could never meet its biological parent is ethically wrong so postmortem donation of sperm or ova should not be allowed.

The parent must also be an adult human. That excludes using sperm or ova from aborted fetuses, creating a child whose parent was never born, who would need to explain that "...actually my mother was a fetus." Or cloning a child from a dying child. These are the unprecedented scientific and ethical issues that we are looking at within these areas.

In other words, we must recognize that the right to bear children does not include the right to deny children their natural rights of natural biological integrity, knowing their biological identity and being part of their biological family. Neither does it include denying children at least the chance, when being conceived, of meeting their biological parents. Society should not be complicit in any procedures that involve breaches of the fundamental human rights of children in this context, that is, it should not approve or fund any procedure for the creation of a child, unless the procedure is consistent with a child's right to a natural biological heritage and other rights that flow from that right. And society should recognize that any genetic procedure that would turn out to be harmful to the future child or to a future generation or contrary to their interests is morally unacceptable and should be prohibited.

Now, the challenges that new reproductive technologies in combination with same-sex marriage raise will include legal challenges in the courts to legislation, such as that in Canada, that bans paying surrogate mothers. Married gay men argue that they have a right to found a family, and that just as it was discrimination against them not to allow them to marry, it is likewise discrimination against them with respect to exercising their right to found a family to ban payment to surrogate mothers, because that is the only way they can have children. In Canada, we also prohibit payment for sperm or ova. The same arguments are being launched there that the ban on payment is unconstitutional because it constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. So these two unprecedented new realities of same-sex marriage and new reproductive technologies are coalescing to present unprecedented challenges to children's most fundamental human rights.

In conclusion, knowing who our biological relatives are and relating to them is central to how we form our human identity, relate to others in the world and

find meaning in life, all complex, intimate realities in every human life that we used to address through religion, but now must also deal with as secular societies. Children and their descendents who don't know their genetic origins cannot sense themselves as embedded in a web of people, past, present and to come in the future, through whom they can trace the thread of life's passage down the generations, to them and from them. As far as we know, humans are the only animals where experiencing genetic relationship is integral to their sense of themselves. What we know and are learning now of the effects of eliminating that experience is that doing so is harmful to children, biological parents, families, and society. And we can only imagine how much more damage would be done to a child who was born, not from the union of a natural sperm and a natural ovum, which is the way of passing on life to the next generation that opposite-sex marriage institutionalizes, but born from gametes constructed through biotechnology. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Question: Thank you for putting this together. I have two brief questions. One is, when we talk about in Canada moving toward building the new standards of marriage into the curriculum in school, I wanted to ask about.... I certainly don't think it's the job of schools to teach children their moral rights. I think there are other issues right now such as evolution in schools, which is a major issue as well. Dr. Buckingham, if you could address that, if that's possible? And then also, for all the legal panelists, if there was ever a possibility of leaving marriage to the religious and spiritual realm and leaving a civil union only to the State realm?

Buckingham: We used to have religion taught in schools, Christian religion taught in schools. And over time, as our society became more pluralistic, there was a decision made to exclude that teaching from the schools. I would suggest that that may be a possible answer to the problem. It seems to be difficult for some schools to teach about sex and sexuality without teaching morals along with it, and it may be appropriate that that issue be left, as with religion, to the education of the parents and that be taught at home. At the moment, it's extremely controversial and this kind of material and the morality is being taught in schools and is expanding. I will speak just briefly to the issue of leaving marriage to religious institutions and having the public recognition as a civil union. That has been discussed in Canada. Many people thought, or some people thought, that would be a very good resolution. Unfortunately, our constitutional scheme provides some boundaries or some barriers to being able to do that. But it may be a possibility that could be considered down the road for other countries. And some European countries, for example, have a separation between civil marriage and religious marriage, which would facilitate that kind of an approach.

Elliott: Just to pick up on what Janet was saying, I think that the principal difficulty here was an internal difficulty in Canada that made the option of

separating marriage from the civil and religious realm completely impossible, because we can't have national civil unions in this country. But this raised the further problem on an international level that the civil unions that exist, for example, in France and Germany, they don't move across boundaries very easily, so you do effectively have a second-class relationship problem when you have a civil union system, because the French civil union is very different even from the German civil union system or the British civil union system or the Australian civil union system. So it's not universally recognized and there's a great debate always about what rights go into these civil unions. The French one has very few, the British one has very comprehensive, and that's one of the reasons why we argue, apart from the moral issue that gays and lesbians should be treated the same, we argue that marriage was the most convenient way of ensuring that equality because it is an institution, legally, that means the same thing across Canada and around the world, in terms of the bundle of rights that go with that institution.

Hawkes: The Canadian Human Rights Commission has studied the issue of marriage around the debate of same-sex marriage and at the end of their study, they put out a report that said, in Canada, we need more options for couples. Right now, it's marriage or common law. And if you're a heterosexual common-law couple, after one to three years, then certain rights and obligations are imposed upon you as a heterosexual couple, whether you like it or not. And they said that in society there should be more options for couples to choose along the way, but that all of those options should be open equally to gay and lesbian couples and heterosexual couples, so that if we have civil unions, both gay couples and heterosexual couples should have access to it as well as marriage. It should be equally accessible, but we should have more options. At a time, in my province of Ontario, only Protestant marriages were recognized. Catholic and Jewish marriages were not. No one would ever have said, "Let's keep marriage for the Protestants and we'll give civil union to the Catholics and the Jews." No one would have ever thought that kind of separate but equal would have been acceptable. So we're saying the same thing, that it's not acceptable for us either.

Question: First I'd like to say thank you for the variety of perspectives, and I might have addressed a question to any of you, but I'd like to address this question to Dr. Buckingham. I think I wrote down what you said as clearly as I could. If I got it wrong, I apologize, and you can correct me. I think I heard you say something toward the end of your presentation, like: "the purpose of changing the definition of marriage and the laws that follow is to exclude and marginalize those of us who hold traditional views." I don't know if that is correct or not, but if that is what you said, I'm confused, because I would think that the purpose of changing the definition of marriage and the laws that follow is rather to provide equal opportunity for and the legitimation of caring relationships for all the citizens of Canada. So it seems that it turns the question toward the dominant majority of heterosexual persons and away from the marginalized minority of gay persons.

Buckingham: The answer is quite easy and it's that you heard me wrong. I said the implication, not the purpose, but the outcome, of doing that.

Question: But does it still, then, focus upon the majority who holds the traditional views rather than focusing it upon those who hold the minority view.

Buckingham: Once the definition of marriage is changed to include another group or the definition of marriage is changed for all of society, it has implications on minority religions who cannot accept that view. And so the implications for those minority religions will be marginalization and restrictions on their religious freedoms. I'm talking about the impact on religious groups. I'm not talking about the impact on the couples.

Somerville: Perhaps I can speak from personal experience to that. The reason that there was such protest about my being awarded this honorary doctor of science degree from Ryerson University was that simply the fact that I opposed same-sex marriage meant, in the protesters' eyes, that I was hateful, bigoted, discriminatory, prejudiced. For instance, I was described as a neo-Nazi, told that I should join the Ku Klux Klan, and there were many other examples of that kind of language. The point I want to make here is that it's not only unacceptable to advocates of same-sex marriage to say, as I did, that you've got problems with same-sex marriage or to explain the reasons why you oppose it, but also, you become labelled as a hateful person, simply because you oppose same-sex marriage, and that's exactly what happened to me. It was also claimed that I should not be allowed to speak in the university because of those views, whether or not I was speaking on same-sex marriage. And these protests caused a huge outburst right across the country. In fact, most of the newspapers picked it up and treated it as an issue of academic freedom and freedom of speech, and therefore, were opposed to what happened, even the one's, such as the Globe and Mail, that supported same-sex marriage.

We're seeing these sorts of fallouts from the activism around same-sex marriage increasing, for instance, teachers have been suspended because they've expressed the view that they believe homosexuality is not morally acceptable under their beliefs which are founded on the Bible. We also have hate crime legislation in Canada that is, a prohibition on inciting hatred against an identified group on certain bases. Relatively recently, the hate crime provision was amended to include homosexuality expressly, as a prohibited base for inciting hatred. In the protests surrounding my case, it was alleged in the newspapers that maybe I could be prosecuted for hate crime for my opposition to same-sex marriage, along the lines of the arguments that I just gave you.

Hawkes: For years in Canada, we've had a definition of marriage that has allowed for divorce, and many religions do not support divorce. My understanding is none of those have been marginalized. None of those have been discriminated against. None of those have been taken to court because they don't support divorce. We have in Canada this amazing ability to protect minority rights and this ability particularly to protect religious minority rights. Also, I happened to

be one of those people who led the protest at Ryerson, and certainly within all of our movements, we have our crazies, and with all of our movements, we have people who would cause death threats and problems within all of our movements. We were protesting Ryerson's decision, specifically the timing of that decision, to honor a leading opponent of gay marriage in the midst of the national debate on gay marriage. We thought the timing was inappropriate and that was the point we were trying to make at Ryerson. We weren't saying that Ms. Somerville didn't have a right to her opinion or a right to state her opinion, etc. We just said it was wrong for Ryerson, a university in the middle of the gay community, to honor a leading opponent in the midst of the discussions. Wait until the decision is over if they had wanted to honor that opponent.

Question: We claim the title evangelical also, but we're not fundamentalists. And sometimes we resent not being spoken of as evangelicals. Dr. Buckingham, you contrasted two views of marriage: one was the traditional and one was what you claimed to be modern. The traditional being family-centered and the modern being love-centered, romantic-centered. And yet you, evangelicals and others have recognized marriage that has been only love-centered, and that's the marriage of people in their forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies, who have been widowed, who come into it not for any children or to raise families, but for love and security. I'm sure you don't condemn them. I'm sure you recognize their marriage. Why then, did you use the argument in a disparaging way, associating gay marriage with the love-centered notion in order to reject that position? Would you accept it?

Buckingham: I think I made the point in my talk that we make our public policy based on the norms and expectations rather than the exceptions. So I said we have historically made our public policy based on the family-centered model. The State's interest in strong and stable marriages is for the benefit of the children. Does the State really care whether two people stay together or don't stay together in a loving union? No, I would argue that the State doesn't really have a strong interest in that. And so we have made our public policy based on the family-centered model because it was in the interest of the State to have children raised in homes where they're going to have two parents, they're not going to be in poverty, they're going to have two people to care for them who are their biological parents, because this has historically been considered the best situation for children. Certainly we are not opposed to older couples getting married, and they still follow the norm and fit within the definition of the husband and wife marriage. And I don't purport to speak on behalf of all evangelical Christians worldwide. But the majority would follow the family-centered model of marriage, as would many other religious traditions.

Question: First, to the woman from Australia, that was a very insightful presentation. My question to you is: What about the right of life itself? Not only the children's rights or the parents' rights, but life itself? And then to Janet, who to me sounded a little bit... [speaker didn't finish the last sentence] I'm very

sorry for the victimization. My question to you is: Have you or your organization been engaged in discrimination or active lobbyism against same-sex marriages?

Somerville: We are the first generation of humans ever that hold the essence of life itself in the palm of our collective human hand. We can now transform life. There is new movement called the transhumanists. (In fact, there was a panel at this conference two days ago that discussed that development.) Transhumanists believe that with our new technoscience we are on our way to what they call a posthuman future, that homo sapiens is an obsolete model and that we'll be replaced by redesigning ourselves. We can't get into that, but placing my presentation on the implications of same-sex marriage and new reproductive technologies that I have proposed to you within the context of what the transhumanists are proposing, I would argue we must protect the essence of human life; we must hold it in trust for future generations. And that requires restricting some uses of new reproductive technologies, which, as I've explained, is connected with issues raised by same-sex marriage. In legalizing same-sex marriage we say, as a society, that same-sex couples have a right to found a family, and that, in turn, opens up a very strong argument for their claim that, "I've got a right to use these technologies to found that family even though they transform the mode of transmission of life." So the new questions we have to ask, which did not exist in the past because the technology didn't exist, include: What does respect for the transmission of life require? What does respect for the human germ cell line—the basic genes we pass on from generation to generation that form the human gene pool—require? Those are all unprecedented new questions of immense importance. If it's any comfort, we are working on them in ethics.

Buckingham: In response to the comment or question about my own discriminatory behavior, I will tell you, I have not called anyone names. I have been called bigoted and homophobic. I have been threatened. I have received hate mail. I have not sent any hate mail. I have never commented that gays and lesbians should not be treated with dignity. I've never said that their buildings should be razed or burned. I will say I do not believe that equality, and treating people with equal dignity, requires the definition of marriage to be changed. There are other ways of respecting people's relationships.

Question: Once again, compliments on that work. I'm Daniel Helminiak from the University of West Georgia. Many of you may know me from my book *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* and more recently *Sex and the Sacred: Gay Identity and Spiritual Growth.* In other words, I'm well versed in these issues. I'm highly impressed with this argument about the rights of the children. Except for a doubt that comes up when we're going to have some symbolic meaning of marriage, which casts doubt on the whole agenda behind it. But in contrast to that, what was going on with Dr. Buckingham. . . . I distinguished in religion the (1) inessential, e.g., customs, practices; (2) the indeterminate, e.g., the things with God that no one will ever be able to resolve by

agreement; and (3) the indispensable, the things that have to do with this life, which we could, in good reason, settle. You made the statement that you hold things in faith and you hope that no one would think you're wrong for that and you should not be marginalized for holding these views. I think you are wrong. The evidence is against it on every front, and to suppose that just because it's religious opinion it has to be expressed is one of the problems in this discussion we're having here. You want to appeal to the scriptures? You should start holding your slaves, you've got to take all your money out of the bank, and you as a woman should not be speaking to us. Please.

Buckingham: Thanks for those marginalizing comments.

Question: You deserve them.

Question [different person]: A simple question to Margaret Somerville. Given your main focus is the welfare, the well-being, of children, I don't quite understand why you would approve of and be fine with civil union and not with marriage.

Somerville: That's a very good question and it's one I'm often asked. The reason is that civil unions—and it's what Mr. Elliott said—don't automatically carry the same rights as marriage. So civil unions don't carry the right to found a family. My problem with same-sex marriage is not the union of the two people and the public recognition of that. I support that. My problem is that it automatically, and in both national and international law, carries an express right, to found a family, which then brings in all these other claims about rights to use these technologies, abolition of children's rights to have both a father and a mother and so on.

There's new genetic research—we haven't got time to go into this—in rats that shows that some of our genes need to be activated by certain behavior on the part of our parents, and if we don't experience that behavior within a certain critical window period, those genes shut down for life. So my argument is—and research is starting to show—that men parent differently from women, and we need both forms of parenting. I think we will find genes that are activated by a mother's conduct that wouldn't be activated by a father's, and vice versa. So it's paradoxical: At the same time as we're finding out how important, for instance, complementary parenting of men and women is, rather than just intuitively knowing that and acting on that intuition, for instance, in establishing the institution of opposite-sex marriage, we're abolishing the ways in our society in which we fulfilled those needs of children.

Question: My name is Donald Boisvert. I teach here at Concordia in Montreal. Thank you, the four of you, for a very engaging panel. My question is for Dr. Somerville. This is the first time I've heard you speak, so I'm also grateful for that. I think you mentioned in the beginning of your talk that your position is not religiously based, if I'm not mistaken. I was powerfully struck in your presentation at how it reflects traditional Catholic papal teaching on marriage,

procreation, new technologies. I was wondering if you have any comments on that sort of strong Catholic flavor to your position.

Somerville: I'm giving the Massey Lectures in Canada next month. I've written a book to go with them: *The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit.* And the second Massey Lecture, is an argument for what I call a presumption in favor of nature, the natural and life. So I am what you would probably call a modern natural ethics, natural law-based person. And to the extent that that reflects a Thomas Aquinas kind of approach to issues, and to the extent that it is part of Catholic received wisdom, then there's definitely the same kind of basis. But I don't do it because it's religious and there are issues where you would hear me speak and you would say, "Well, that doesn't coincide with what the Catholic Church believes." I just think that, in these very fundamental issues that concern life itself, the idea of a presumption in favor of the natural is the wisest one to adopt, in particular in light of the enormous technoscience power we now have to change it. It doesn't mean we can't change the natural, it means that we have to show that we're justified in doing so—I also, in another Massey lecture, develop a concept that I call the secular-sacred. I believe that, traditionally, we accessed the sacred through religion. I don't believe we can do that as a society in the world of the future, if only because, for instance, we're all different religions. And so what I'm trying to do is find some ways that this very ancient human wisdom that for a lot of us is encapsulated and very importantly passed on to us through the religions, can be encapsulated and passed on to future generations other than through religion. Religion will still be important but it can no longer be the sole means of achieving this goal. So obviously then I'm into the same areas as those in which religion plays a very important role. We're into the same tasks. But I'm not basing what I'm proposing on religion, although I hope it will be acceptable to people who are religious, and if so, no matter which religion, and, as well, to people who are not religious. My basic goal is to try to find a "shared ethics" (a concept that needs careful definition) that as many people as possible can buy into.

Question: My name is Gary Sealey. I'm the president of Servas International, which built 15,000 homes in eighty countries around the world. And my question is: Given the theme of this conference, World's Religions After September 11th: A Global Congress—a day which marks a day of hate and terror and fear—what can religions do. . . . What must religions do to celebrate diversity and celebrate loving relationships that support children in their development needs? I'm not talking about law. I'm talking about the religions. So if any of the panelists could reply. . . .

Buckingham: I can say within my community the whole debate over same-sex marriage has caused a lot of self-reflection on how we have treated gays and lesbians in our midst. And I think that has been a very positive move. There has been a lot of discussion about ministry and caring for one another and

reconciliation. I am very troubled by what's happening, in terms of marginalizing language and mudslinging between different religious groups and protests being launched and nasty language being flung about. And I'm very troubled by that and I would hope that religious organizations, in particular, can find way of bringing peace and reconciliation. Our doors have been open to that and we certainly have met with leaders from the gay and lesbian community on those issues. But I am troubled by those who are not of the reconciliation bent.

Elliott: This isn't really my topic but I'm going to put my oar in here just very quickly, because it's something that Reverend Hawkes and I were talking about over lunch. Over the years, the mantra from the religious Right has been we hate the sin but we love the sinner. And I can tell you that it's been my experience as a gay man that we hear an awful lot about hating the sin, and very little, if anything, about loving the sinner. And I'd like to put out a challenge to Janet's group and the other conservative religions that condemn homosexuality, because I think there's one thing that we might be able to agree on, and I think it would be a great step forward toward reconciliation. Right now there are still eight countries in the world that still have capital punishment for homosexual acts. Most of the great religions of the world, including the Roman Catholic Church, condemn capital punishment. I think it would be great if those religions would stand up, united with us, and say it's time to stop the imposition of capital punishment on gays and lesbians just because of their sexual acts. I think that would be a great step forward in trying to reconcile the gay and lesbian community to the world religions that have been extremely critical of them.

Hawkes: In line with that, when I was invited to this conference, I called our regional elder, our bishop of sorts, to tell her that I was coming. And she was just in the midst of writing a letter to the United Nations because ten gay people in Iran was about to be executed, and she was trying to intervene on their behalf. And so I echo what Douglas said. If one of the themes of this conference that keeps coming up is that compassion is a central virtue of all of our religions, and that the golden rule is a central value in all of our religions. And I would just like to invite others, who hold a different perspective, to think about our families too. When Ms. Somerville continues to repeat the phrase "genetic orphans," people in our church shed tears. One mom came to me when she knew I was coming here and said "Could you please try to make the point to her to stop using that phrase, because she's talking about my son." And I would ask people to treat our families—because we have families, too—to treat our families in the way you want your family to be treated, to treat our marriages in the way you want your marriages to treated. And I think even if we disagree, if the world religions would start practicing compassion and start practicing the golden rule, then the broader society, instead of running away from religion, would view religion as something to be respected even in the midst of our differences.

Somerville: Just to respond to the plea about the term "genetic orphans," which was actually a term that a young adopted woman used to me. She said, "I am a genetic orphan." It's a term that children who don't know who their genetic parents are, are using, and there are Web sites you can go to where they're trying to contact other children who might be their half siblings, because, for instance, they were conceived from the same sperm bank. And these children tell me things like, "I get up every morning and I look in the mirror, and half of me is missing. Society had no right to do this to me." So those stories are not my invention. The reason you see this as an unacceptable term to use, Reverend Hawkes, is because you are looking at the situation and talking—and I agree that you should do so—from the perspective of the rights of the adults who desperately want to have children and want to set up a family which will not be based on biological bonds. I'm speaking from exactly the opposite side and I'm telling you how those children feel about themselves. Just as the parents you speak about feel wounded that somebody is saying their kid is a "genetic orphan," those children are wounded because they say my natural right to know my biological heritage is not being respected. So what we're really looking at here is: Should adults' preferences prevail or should children's needs and rights prevail? You, as I understand what you have said, choose the former; I choose the latter. That is where our views differ.

14

A Jain Perspective on Nonviolence and Warfare

Padmanabh S. Jaini

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

You can see me but I can't see you. I'm quite aware that quite a few people in our presence today have already heard me on this very topic more than once. And others also have spoken on this topic. It is timely in a sense that we are meeting in the context of September 11th. We must not forget that that's the reason this meeting is taking place this week. But September 11th is not an isolated event. It has a long history in the past: from the last century, in which most of us were born, the horrendous events that history has recorded—the First World War, and then the Second World War and the fifty odd million people who perished in that war, the Holocaust, the atom bomb, the partition of India, the colonial powers and the fight against them in Asia, Africa, in North Africa, the rise of Mao and Communism and the slaughter of several millions there, and the rise of Stalin before him. And so one after another, these events accumulate and produce a Viet Nam, a Pol Pot in Cambodia, the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iraq, and recently what we see in Lebanon, and only yesterday what we saw on campus here. This seems to be a perennial problem: we cannot live without bloodshed, without going after our enemies. But most of the warfare is undertaken under the aegis of some church, some holy place, some holy order, some organization that protected, favored, assured that there would be no evil consequences to you because you are right in doing it.

And yet, one can speak of Jainism and of Buddhism—they are in many ways similar—that there is another way of looking at what is happening. The Jains and the Buddhists will be a little different from the other world religions.

These are the two religions of India—and Jainism is a little older than Buddhism, historically speaking. Mahavira, the teacher of the Jains, and Gautama, the Buddha, are contemporaries, from 600 to 500 BCE, in that range. They never mentioned the name of any God as a creator. There was no discussion on when the world was created, who created it, why was it created, or whether there was a fall from paradise, for whatever reason. We do not know how, but all of a sudden, without any prior discussion in the earlier Vedic literature, an atheistic movement appears on the horizon. There are no doubt theories of creation, or of re-creation, in the Vedic texts. The Jains and the Buddhists went forward straight ahead, assuming as if you already knew the reasons for not believing in a creator. That pretty much leaves us with the idea that there is no creation, but we have to figure out by ourselves, what we are!

In the world of today we have Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, three religions that spring from the same monotheistic faith. They have a definite answer to this: they believe that we live only once as human beings and will never be reborn as humans. After this life, we will either end in heaven above or hell below, and forever, a consequence of good or evil life lived on this earth.

Now, the alternative to this theistic belief would be a total rejection of any life after death. According to this belief we live but only once; nothing after this happens, your life ends here, "dust to dust" as the poet says. But the poet also says "this was not spoken of the soul." If that is the case, then there has to be a third alternative. That alternative would be an affirmation of life after death, but not only leading necessarily to a heaven or a hell, as the monotheistic religions believe. Heaven there must be for the virtuous few and hell for those unfortunate evil people, fewer still. In the monotheistic system, souls do not progress further from hell or heaven. One certainly does not come back on this earth as a human being, or any other being at all, because animals are not considered to have souls, in the sense of being reborn in heaven or hell. The alternative of "this is the only life and here it ends" is a totally materialistic doctrine. We have thus these two options, one saying, yes, there is life after death, but in heaven or hell; the other professing end of life at death. The third alternative is of Jains and Buddhists who maintain that the world is altogether without a beginning. Nobody created and nothing has been created. But life in some form, human or nonhuman, has existed eternally and will remain so through endless times. Any suggestion that human life has a beginning in time, a certain number of years, as some theologians would profess, would be arbitrary, to say the least. The Jains and the Buddhists have declared that all forms of life, as human beings, animals, the plants, as well as those beings in heaven or hell—they also do exist—inhabiting the entire world, have been in some form or another in existence from times without a beginning, and will remain so through endless times, continuously moving from one existence to another. This forms a sort of recycling of life, a cycle of rebirths for each sentient being, from one body to another.

What follows from this is the first principle that there was never a time when the soul was free of body, some form of carnation. Soul and body are totally fused together, mixed together in such a way that they are inseparable. But

nobody mixed them, saying "Go mix." The Jain metaphor for such a mixture is that of gold hidden in the ore in the rocks, which is impure gold. Nobody took out a piece of impure gold and said, "go to that rock there." It is there now, and it has been there at all times. But you can go and dig it up. You can apply the chemicals required, and you can purify it. Then it can become pure and there would be no reason for it to become impure again. Not all gold is discoverable. There's no guarantee that all gold is discoverable, nor that all discovered gold will attain equal purity or perfection.

But there are certain rules that apply here. This is only a metaphor, but this will help you understand how the Jains view the entire human existence, the animal existence, and also the vegetable existence. In a way, others don't see it at all, that each and every leaf of grass, each and every animal you can think of, every insect you can think of. . .is like that "hidden" gold. You can think of any number of beings with two senses, three senses, four senses, and the five senses. Within the five senses, you have beings with intelligence, including certain animals and of course, the entire world of human beings. And there are also the heavenly and hellish beings. All these share one thing. Everyone is an embodied person. The soul is attached to a body. And this body, this material body, is somehow joined with this nonmaterial, spiritual element, which is called a soul, characterized by consciousness. You can never find consciousness independent of matter. But you can find matter without consciousness. The idea of a "pure" soul without any body at all, and yet conscious and active, is an exception to the rule, conjured up by those who believe in a Creator God. The Jains allow no such exception, not a single being, however exalted.

Such a God, Ishvara, The Lord, is further believed to be eternally pure *sadā śuddha* and hence able to save those who are bound to this world of suffering. Such a being does not exist. We are all in this bondage. But some of us, if not all of us, can strive to break this, through the process of purifying (like chemical to the impure gold), and proceed to the path that leads to freedom. This will be a total freedom from bondage to the body, to the senses, and the limitations that come with it, and all the passions that go with it. The hunger and thirst and everything else will cease and then a time may come when this consciousness will have reached such a point—freedom of, freedom from, all the wants—that this consciousness can—and here we're probably involved in a leap of faith so to say, that we will escape, from this body connection forever, once and for all. And we will remain in the infinite glory of omniscience and peace, never to return, like the purified piece of gold.

This is the sum total, so to say, of how the bondage is and how the freedom from bondage takes place. For at least the technical terms are such as—all Indians use the same words—*saṁsāra* means the recycle of going on and on and on and *mokṣa* literally means a release, emancipation from this body. Jains would say that in the worldly life, at the time of death, impelled by desires, our soul grasps some body, some material thing. It will animate it and proceed to the next existence. And this movement is dominated by what we have done, or continue to do. All volitional acts, called karma, preserved like so many

memories. The memories of the world are stored in our mind. The words are stored by a certain mechanism called memory. And this memory comes and goes. You add some memory and you take away some memory. You forget your old phone number. You pick up your new phone numbers. You pick up new words and other words remain dormant inside.

Seemingly there's a karmic impression, with the volitions that we have that produce this, some kind of an impression. When that particular volition is very strong, it will produce strong impressions. When the volition is very low, it will create a different kind of impression. Such as, say, if you were to make a mark on water and a mark will be made but it will soon disappear. Or if you go and cut part of the tree with an arrow saying "John loves Jane," so that this gets inscribed on the tree. That will remain for a long time and then fall out next season. And then, you may cut something with a chisel on the stone. It will remain for a very long time. Volitions are seen like that, that they leave a stamp. Our angers and our thirsts and our passions and our hatreds and our ambitions and our compassions—good things also—these things will make a mark somewhere in a way which we cannot explain how. The Jains have chosen the word karma—karma means basically what you do. So what you do really has a way of staying there for some time, for a longer time, and building up, so to say. And if it stays a longer time, it will take more time than one life, this one. So it will continue with you when you leave this body and pick up another. The time taken in leaving one body and picking up another is a fraction of a second. There's no time lag, that you wait somewhere in a waiting hall. The soul has this particular ability to pick up immediately, because that is the way it has been conditioned. But even when the soul is free from this body, there is the subtle body of karma, with which it then picks up another body. And so the process goes on.

But there are two things happening. We are inheriting something now from the past. I have inherited my body, my senses, the way I am, and so forth—the whole mechanism of the body. And what I am doing now is adding to something that is already there. I am losing something as I go and I also add something. So in sum total there will be always something abiding there. And this particular thing is what is "me" at this moment, as a result of my wandering into these various states of being, from human, animal, human, and so forth.

Jainism is a word about which I should probably say something. It began with the mendicants who left the household life and thought about these things. They analyzed what is the way—very detailed descriptions are found in the Jain texts—as to how to take control of ourselves? What are the driving forces within us? And they analyzed right from the vegetable life, observing a "leaf of grass" grasping water and seeing how ants go on busily from one ant to another picking up piece by piece, going here and going there. And of course, they could see the other animals and human beings. They arrived at four driving forces called *saṁjñā-s. Jña* means to know. It is cognition, gnosis. So *saṁjñā-s* are the basic instincts. And there are four basic instincts in all beings, regardless of what they are. From the lowest form of being, a leaf of grass, up to fully grown up human beings or animals.

The first thing is food, *āhāra.* Constantly, we are looking out for food. Animals are running around seeking nothing but food. The lower species are working most of their time hunting for food and digesting it, etc. So food is the biggest thing, and as human beings started living in the caves or whatever we have, in society as human beings, it is for food that they then come out and then they go. So the world is constantly reappearing the way it is now. Do not think we have not been here like this before! In the beginningless past all sorts of possibilities have existed. So the first instinct is for *āhāra.* We begin to understand that a being is alive because it's craving for food. And this particular instinct is so strong that nature has provided, we see how the newborn animals can find where milk is and go automatically to that place. And so this one therefore is the major preoccupation of all beings, regardless of whether they are two-sense or five-sense animals and human beings.

The second instinct is the mating, *maithuna,* procreation if you want to call it. It is a dominant factor, with the food comes this one. And it is hunting after the mate or hunting after the partner, with procreation and other things are added to that. Procreation however is not driving us all the time, we know that now.

But the basic drive is to get food and to get mating available. And it is in this that Jains perceive what kinds of passions are working. Little food is enough for sustenance. Animals can only eat so much. And yet they all have desires for more than the available food. We can hold a lot and gobble it up, eat it up. Our desires for food are a billion more times than what our body actually needs. And since everybody wants that food, there's scarcity of food. Because our desires are far more, there is not enough of anything for anybody. And the same thing is with the mating also. Although one need not have more than one, or one time to procreate, so to say. There's a fight that goes on among the animal world and even among men. Greed is such that it cannot be satisfied.

And this produces what then? Because the source material is not enough, it produces the third *saṁjñā.* It doesn't come after, but they are all together. It is fear, *bhaya saṁjñā,* that is, fear of the other. This fellow wants my food. I want this, and this fellow also wants, and therefore I must dominate this person. And it is this fear of the other, that my needs will be somehow taken away by the other person, that this fear drives on to the fourth want, and that is the most deadly one, according to the Jain texts, which is the sole source of many evils existing now.

Thus the desire to dominate, the desire to obtain mastery of everything, all sources of food and all sources of mating, and other things added up. It is this desire to dominate, to hoard the whole thing in hand, to have all the oil in your hand, all the raw material in your hand. This is called the fourth deadly drive. It's called *parigraha saṁjñā.* What does *parigraha* mean? Multiplied possessions. *Parigraha* is all around. I'm surrounded by food, surrounded by everything so that my hands are so extended and nobody can touch it. Animals cannot indulge much in *parigraha saṁjñā* because they have no pockets to carry. We build up pockets. Right now I have about ten pockets on me. It is the idea that you can store things. Animals also have *parigraha-s.* They also know how to store. Ants gather and bees gather. Animals have ways of storing

something. Stealing here and putting there. If you observe the films made by Attenborough, I think you've seen how the birds and the bees and all those little things do it. But there is a limit to them, because they cannot carry on them more than what they can. But they can't make clothes for them to put on so they can add up the pockets, so to say. *Parigraha* is surrounding yourself with possessions. It is this particular instinct in which the human beings have been extraordinarily inventive, to increase *parigraha,* and to hold on to it in some way.

That is how the wars take place. The deadliest, our instinct to fight, and to dominate are all part of this, and that is called *hiṁsā.* I have given this example elsewhere how this *parigraha* is dominating in such a way that it has been affected by technology. Because technology makes it possible to make storehouses, to make all other things in such a way that you can make them compact, keep things and everything, almost like the CDs now. Just imagine how much they can just control in one disk.

I shall provide Mahatma Gandhi's example, because you cannot talk of *ahiṁsā* without mentioning Mahatma Gandhi, and this is a small example. In the days when Mahatma Gandhi was writing for his *Navajivan* [name of a journal edited by him] and other things, he used to correspond with people. And in those days, postcards were available, a postcard for a penny each. And he would never use any other paper, but postcards, one postcard after another, serially number two, three, like that. And after it is written, you don't have to buy a stamp. It all came with one go. One day he received a very abusive letter, a letter of four pages, with a pin attached to it to hold it. And it abused Gandhi, for various reasons. So Gandhi read it, and he picked up this pin. He used to carry a pincushion, in which he put it down so it can be used again. So he wrote one card, one letter of that one line card to that gentleman saying—he saved that pin—"Your point is well taken." I'm giving this to contrast the pin with the advanced technology, although there's a technology in the pin also, which can be used a hundred times. But new technology is staples. Imagine now. For staples, you need staples themselves, a machine to carry the staples, you need a thumb, you need to press it. And you need so many more things. And the staples are useless later on. I'm just giving you the amount of waste that comes with the comfort that is provided. This is a small amount. And now you can multiply this into the atomic weapons and the things that have come in with atomic weapons, that you cannot store them and there's danger there. The basic instinct is the same—to overpower others, to control the means of having food and water and, well, everything else.

For those who are probably not aware of who the Jains are, let me say a few words. The word *Jina* has the root *ji*—you apply a certain suffix and now it becomes—*Jina,* "he who is a conqueror of oneself." That word is never used for a person who wins a war on the battlefield. It is only applied to the spiritual victors in that sense. And Mahavira is called a *Jina,* just as Buddha is called a Buddha, meaning one who is enlightened, from the root *budh.* And so the followers of this *Jina* are called *Jaina,* a secondary form. And from that you get the world Jainism. Originally, the word applied only to those mendicant followers

who followed Mahavira's path of total renunciation of all or most of our wants. They would not commit themselves nor cause anybody to commit any violence to any being. And they will not promote anything that will make violence possible. And it is in this way that Jainism began, with a large group of mendicants who left the household life, left all the activities, subsisted on the least possible, amount needed for food and water and shelter, and led a very frugal life, sustained by the laypeople able to support them.

So there's a bicameral system. We've got the followers of *Jina,* who are actively engaged in meditation, and then there are laypeople following those similar rules in some minor ways, and in this way, they help each other. So the monks will help the laypeople keep their practices and the laypeople will support them by providing the food and shelter that is needed. And it's in this way, how the minimal can produce spiritual existence, that the Jain community has been living—a smaller community compared to others. I think the followers of Jainism are only more than the Zoroastrians among the ancient world religions I'm talking about. I'm talking about the modern period, or the medieval period. They are not more than, I was told, about five million Jains, maybe seven. But my point here is that the number has not prevented them from leading a life that is consistent with the life of the mendicants. In other words, the mendicancy is to be understood not simply as living in a monastery. The monastic life elsewhere (in the West) is a different one. The monastic life is a boarding school life. You live in one place, you eat in one place, and you do not go out. You spend your whole life there, like a nunnery or monastery. Not the Jain monks. They must walk, barefoot, in India. They are all celibate and they must not eat from sunset to sunrise, for life. And imagine the kind of living, that at the same time, *ahārā* and *maithuna*—those two drives have been taken care of by minimizing them on one hand, and removing them altogether. No fear and no *parigraha.* And monks in India have no pockets at all. No food can be saved or stored for tomorrow. And in this way, the Jain community of mendicants and the lay followers have sustained each other.

The layperson also has vows, restricted ones or minor ones. Well, how does a Jain layperson, achieve his goals, living in this world? The mendicants have left it, and they are making spiritual progress in their own way. For those who are living in this world, as we do, how will they achieve this? And here I'm coming to *ahiṁsā,* which will take me to the favorite subject of the day, warfare, in a short while. To practice *ahiṁsā* means not only refraining from inflicting injury on others, but also renouncing the very will toward attachment and aversion that initiates such wants. A Jain therefore examines in minute detail, the intentions that lay behind ordinary activities that constitute the daily life of the householder—earning a livelihood, raising a family, and supporting the mendicants. Not to entertain even the thought of injury would be a tall order for one who must deal everyday with a world that is prone to violence.

A householder's activities, however, could be examined to see whether they were free from what the Jains call *saṅkalpaja hiṁsā* [*Saṅkalpaja* = intentional]: harm intentionally planned and carried out; organized violence, as one used in

warfare. But more than that *saṅkalpaja hiṁsā* would be, for example, the intention with which a hunter might stalk his prey, or someone who goes fishing will make a similar effort. Such willful violence has to be renounced before one could be considered a follower of *Jina.* And the Jain texts are replete with sermons rejecting all violence perpetrated for sport, or in sacrifices, whether sacred or familial. Adopting a proper means of livelihood becomes extremely important for a conscientious Jain. There are not many of them, mind you. Nevertheless, there are models and examples. Since the chosen occupation determines the degree to which violence can be restricted, the Jain texts have drawn up a long list of professions that are unsuitable for a Jain layperson. Certain Jain texts forbid, for example, animal husbandry and trade in alcohol or animal by-products, leaving room for only such professions as commerce, arts and crafts, and clerical and administrative occupations. In all these activities, some harm to the lowest forms of life is inevitable, but Jains engage in them if they behave with scrupulous honesty. Injury done while engaged in such activities was considered—and this is the second thing—*ārambhaja-hiṁsā,* occupational violence. A doctor must perform an operation. But this violence cannot be helped, but could be minimized though, by choosing a profession like business, which is free from causing harm, as indeed Jains have traditionally done. There are a great many of them in commerce and industry.

Now, of course, Jains do not prefer military service much. Larger questions facing modern society such as national defense, weaponry of mass destruction, limiting populations of wild animals and insect pests, the use of toxic chemicals, the morality of capital punishment, the use of animals in medical research, and other social concerns that perforce involve violence were not addressed by the Jains in the past. But nowadays these are asked and they must perforce find answers to that. But one thing that I will say for certain, that the Jains have been able to continue down through the ages the practice of nonviolence, adjusting themselves to the situation in such a way that they could minimize the violence and yet carry on leading a holy life as they understood it.

Vegetarian food is the first thing that comes to my mind, and you could say that a Jain is a vegetarian. A nonvegetarian can become a Jain, but soon he will be vegetarian too. But of course, those who are following vegetarianism without being a Jain, we also count them as Jains. For those, especially in the West, who are used to associating the practice of nonviolence with such larger movements as advocacy of civil rights, the Jain preoccupation with eating vegetarian food and protecting domestic animals may seem rather trivial. But the privileged position enjoyed by being such a small minority may appear to have given the Jain community a unique niche in Indian society. So it was able to concentrate all of its missionary zeal on reforming the dietary habits of other Indians. Since meat could not be procured without cruelty, partaking in the meat of animals in fact harms oneself by creating a latent effect in the mind of the meat-eater. They accept items of dairy products. They did not have a conflict with the Jain logic on this point, but was justified because milking a cow or a goat did not involve any harm to the animal itself.

Most Jains advocate kindness, in some form or another, to animals. Other religions might advocate kindness to animals either because they also are creatures of God, according to their theology, or because they are the embodiment of the same spirit as us human beings, as Vedantins might explain, that all life is coming from the same source. But this has not deterred the adherents of some of these religions from sacrificing animals for ritual purposes, nor prevented the advocates of other religions from rationalizing animal slaughter in order to sustain the higher life of humans. When you look to the number of cattle that were slaughtered mercilessly in the wake of the Mad Cow Disease, or Mad Man Disease, whatever you call it, and nobody shed a tear about them. They were raised to die anyway. But the point is the Jains felt that there was a great, great violence being done to the animals.

Notwithstanding the practical difficulties for all people to procure strictly vegetarian food, the Jains have continued to argue that animal slaughter can never be tolerated under any circumstances. We may recall here the words of the Jina Mahavira, the Great Hero. His real worldly name is Vardhamana, but he is better known by his title Mahavira, the Great Hero—just as Buddha's real name is Gautama Siddhartha, but he's known as Buddha. These are the words of Mahavira, in translation: "No being in the world is to be harmed by a spiritually inclined person, whether knowingly or unknowingly. All beings wish to live, and no being wishes to die." A true Jain, therefore, consciously refrains from harming any being, however small.

The Jains here share the belief that *hiṁsā* is a cause of transmigration. Either you have the model of nothing after this. Heaven and hell, and nothing after that, or the infinitely beginningless recycling of life. There's nothing in between possible. It would be completely arbitrary to say fifteen lives ago or twenty lives ago. But that begs the question again. No creator, no creations, and therefore, we are as we are, in some form or other, from beginningless times. Sometimes we have been animals too, or even worse. For this reason, a being who today is an animal might once have been a human being, or by exercising moral powers, that same animal may be reborn in the future as a human being. In the course of transmigration, there is no spiritual progress possible during a lifetime spent in heaven or hell, states which the Jains consider non-eternal, but of long duration. Nobody goes to heaven forever. You must come down. Similarly with hell. Short time there, short time here. Nothing eternal. The cycle is eternal. You can see yourself now. The dimension you have, each soul has, and we are moving in a parallel fashion. Within the virtually infinite variety of animal life-forms, however, it is possible for a soul to progress from one animal to another animal until by some force, it would be able to cut asunder. It belongs to the animal realm and it wants a human existence.

Jains thus consider human existence to be the gravitational center of the rebirth process, and assume that all other life forms have to be reborn in a human state in order to achieve spiritual liberation. The Jains seem to be unique in believing that all higher animals possess five senses, like an elephant or a tiger, for example, which would include all domestic animals as well as wild

animals that could be trained, and must therefore be allowed to naturally wander through their destinies without interruption by human violence. And I'm going to tell you a story here that tells you what kind of stories were the staple food once upon a time for Jain children.

You can think of a story here that can be seen on the TVs. A beautiful story about an elephant, narrated in the Jain scriptures, illustrates the moral capacity ascribed to higher animals by the Jains. This is a tale about an elephant. Elephants are notable for their long memory. They're huge, but they're vegetarian. That gives them a special place in the mythologies of the Hindus, Buddhists, and the Jains as well. This is the tale of an elephant, which, in his very next rebirth, was reborn as Prince Megha and became an eminent Jain monk under Mahavira. And Mahavira is telling the past story of this particular man: "Look here, this was you in the past." This elephant was the leader of a large herd. You can call it Jumbo the Elephant if you want, to make it a story for children. This elephant was the leader of a large herd that was caught in a huge forest fire. All the animals of the forest ran from their haunts and gathered around the lakes so that the entire area was jammed with beings, both large and small. After standing there for quite some time, the elephant—imagine the crowded place where all the beings are there because there's fire going on all around —after standing there for quite some time, the elephant lifted his leg to scratch himself, and immediately a small hare landed to occupy the spot vacated by his raised foot. Rather than trampling the helpless animal, however, the elephant's mind was filled with great compassion for the plight of his fellow creature. Indeed, his concern for the hare's welfare was so intense that he's said to have cut off forever his associations with future animal destinies. The elephant stood with one leg raised for more than three days until the fire abated and the hare was able to leave. By then, however, the elephant's whole leg had gone numb. And, unable to set down his foot, he toppled over. While maintaining his purity of mind, he finally died and was reborn as Prince Megha, the son of the King Shrenika, the ruler of Magadha, who becomes then a monk and joins the mendicants and follows the spiritual path. This is the attitude, therefore: Thou shall not kill an animal because there is life there capable of rising to human existence. And if you are also not following the required human spiritual life, you may go back to the animal life, which has countless animal species, whereas human life is only one species. But in remembering this story, one must distinguish between what the Jains consider superstitious belief in the holiness of animals, such as the proverbial sacred cows of Hindus, because the Jains don't worship cows. Jains don't dip in the Ganges. Jains don't do such things.

Warfare has been defined as organized violence carried out by political units against each other, and peace as the absence of organized violence. The lawgivers and all Indians have divided such wars into two main categories: permitted wars and obligatory wars, the latter being further qualified as just wars, or *dharma yuddha*. In all these cases, it is claimed by the leaders that war becomes just only because it is ordained by God himself and that human beings are merely exercising the will of the divinity. Mythical stories from the

canons of old can be cited in support of this position. And we know that how in the *Gītā,* Arjuna, the great warrior, had been told by the Lord Krishna, who is an *avatara* of Vishnu, *"hato vā prapsyasi svargam,"* that if you are killed in this battlefield, you will go to heaven; *"jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm"*—and if you live, you'll enjoy this earth. Therefore, rise and fight. Now, one can add all sorts of commentaries on this. The basic thing I am talking here is that all religions have promised that there'd be heaven available for anyone who dies as a martyr in the war, the battlefield. The Jains are an exception to this, this is why I want to read this story.

And this is a story which is based on the sacred texts. And this story appears in the canonical *Bhagavatī Sutra,* which purports to preserve the words of the last *tīrthaṅkara* Mahavira. There, Mahavira is asked about the war between the King of Magadha and some independent kings, which it is now agreed was a historical event, a war in which 84,000 people died. Mahavira's disciples specifically wanted to know whether it was true that all those men would have been reborn in heaven because they had perished on the battlefield. Whether the Jihadist believe in the birth in heaven immediately and therefore they are induced to do that, that also is something that comes to my mind. In answer to this question, Mahavira declared that only one man out of this large army was reborn in heaven, and only one reborn as a man. All the rest ended up either in hell or in the animal realms. Contrary to the widely held belief that death on the battlefield is almost equal to holy martyrdom, the Jain answer as put in the mouth of Mahavira shows extraordinary courage of conviction that death, accompanied by hatred and violence, can never be salutary and must therefore lead to unwholesome rebirths. And then, the story goes, the man who ended up in heaven was a Jain man. The world doesn't know his name. It is Varuna, who had taken the laypeoples' minor vows before he was drafted by his king and sent to the front. Prior to his departure, Varuna vowed that he would never be the first to strike anyone. He would always wait until he was struck first before attacking. Armed with bow and arrow, he took his chariot into battle and came face-to-face with his adversary. Varuna declared that he would not take the first shot and called on his opponent to shoot. Only after his opponent's arrow was already in deadly flight did he let fly his own arrow. His enemy was killed instantly, but Varuna himself lay mortally wounded. Realizing that his death was imminent, Varuna took his chariot off and sat on the ground, holding his hands together in veneration to his teacher Mahavira, he said—and these are the words, quoted—"Salutations to Mahavira, wherever he may be, who administered to me the layman's precepts. Now the time has come for me to face my death, making Jina Mahavira my witness, I undertake the total renunciation of all forms of violence, both gross and subtle, body mind and speech. I remain steadfast in maintaining absolute detachment from this body." Saying this, he pulled out the arrow, and, his mind at peace, died instantly, and was reborn in heaven. This is how you go to heaven.

The second man, a friend of this warrior, was himself severely wounded in the battle. He wanted to follow Varuna and witnessed his peaceful death.

He died soon afterwards, wishing to be like him, and was reborn as a human being. Whatever the moral of this story, the Jains are clear in their belief that wholesome rebirth is assured only to those who die a peaceful death and who renounce all hostility and violence. Without achieving these qualities, no amount of valor on the battlefield guarantees even true death and victory, let alone improving one's spiritual life.

The image of the Jains throughout their long history has been associated with the doctrine of *ahiṁsā.* And the Jains themselves identify with the observance of the practice in their day-to-day life. The fact that human contemporary society, where materialism is all-pervasive even in India, Jain mendicants, who scrupulously adhere to their old vows of nonviolence and nonpossession, still number (in a small community of about six or seven millions Jains) over 12,000 mendicants. Half of them are nuns. A very large number indeed, considering the very small size of the Jaina community, testifies to the continued dedication to the ideal of *ahiṁsā.* Without such total dedication, *ahiṁsā* itself would remain either a fond memory of a lost golden age, or an unachievable future goal. Lay Jains as well abhor all forms of intentional violence, and reduce the necessary amounts of violence associated with their occupations to an absolute minimum. This does not mean that Jains are total pacificists. However, a lay person, as we said above, is given the option of countering an armed adversary in kind, with the reminder that it's proper for a Jain not to be the first to strike. The combatant would also cultivate in mind the Jain doctrine of multiple perspectives, an attitude which allows the Jain to recognize the validity of his adversary's point of view as well. By enabling him to recognize the idea of common ground between himself and his opponent, a Jain would therefore be able to avoid confrontation and try reconciliation and resort to warfare only out of dire necessity, with the understanding that there's no heaven after violence. The Jains appear to have outlined a path of nonviolence that would allow the lay adherents to conduct his daily life with human dignity, while permitting him to cope with the problems of the world in which violence is all-pervasive. The Jains would be the first to admit, in accordance with their own doctrine of *syādvāda,* or qualified assertion, that other religions too discuss some of these same issues. But what distinguishes the Jain conception of nonviolence from that found in other world religions is that it is truly a personal way of religious discipline. It forbids the taking of all life, however that might be justified or excused in other religions, and warns that nothing short of animal rebirth or hell awaits those who kill or who die while entertaining thoughts of violence. This perspective, however, does allow the Jain to sacrifice even his own life by performing what is called *sallekhanā,* or peacefully reducing intake of food when the time of death arrives. In this way, the soul may remain unaffected by attachment and aversion and may meet its corporeal death in perfect peace with itself and the world. Indeed, the holy life is truly consummated when a Jain dies reciting the words of the religion's most solemn prayer: "I ask pardon of all creatures; may all of them pardon me; may I have friendship with all beings; and hostility towards none." Thank you very much.

Questions and Answers

Jaini: Since nobody asked a question, I have brought this to read and I will read it for you. This is not a Jain speaking here. But this has the same message. This is by the great Irish poet Yeats.

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

I think he's also giving voice to the same feeling that we are seeing: "The center does not hold." That's the center, that's what we want. Not going to the extremes. I think this is the theme we've seen all over the world. Thank you very much.

15

Panel Discussion: Perspectives on the Conflict in the Middle East

Panelists: Rabbi Dow Marmur, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Gregory Baum, and Karen Armstrong

Rabbi Dow Marmur

The starting point of my remarks is a quotation from a Christian, from the Protestant Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann: "Place is space which has historical meanings." He makes this fundamental distinction between place and space.

> Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken, which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued.

I would like to suggest to you that from the beginning of its history, the land of Israel has been the place of the Jewish people. And the modern state of Israel is only the current manifestation.

The Jews have occupied many spaces—this so-called diaspora. They've never broken the link with the place. That's why worshippers in every synagogue face Jerusalem to this very day as worshippers in mosques face Mecca. The feasts and fasts that are celebrated according to the calendar and the seasons in the land of Israel. And the land of Israel, together with the people of Israel, and the faith of Israel, constitute the triangle we call Judaism.

And though during much of the time of its history, the land component has been dormant as it were, it was only so geographically. Theologically, it has always stayed alive. And there have always been Jews, albeit a few, in the land of Israel. So to assume this is a new phenomenon, that Zionism is the force by which this situation has emerged, is, I think, to misunderstand Jewish history.

Before the emergence of modern Zionism, pious Jews believed they had to wait until the Messiah would come. What modernists did is that they decided to walk toward the Messiah, and regard the passive waiting as the opium of the weaklings. Those who wished to assimilate disagreed with them, but then were proven, particularly in Germany, terribly wrong. The space Jews have occupied in so many places has proven ominously inhospitable. And when alternatives were offered, Jews in modern times nevertheless decided that, despite the temptation of other countries, they would concentrate on the land which was part of their Jewish consciousness. The Holocaust didn't give rise to the State of Israel. But of course, the Holocaust made it apparent to the world what happens to a people that only has space at the discretion of others, rather than place that is their own. So the emergence of the State of Israel is perceived in the Jewish consciousness today as a triumph, because now, we say, it is always possible for Jews to have place, so that when a space becomes precarious, and God knows it does, there is somewhere to go.

But we are also aware of the fact that this has been achieved with tragedy, a double tragedy. The tragedies that came about after the destruction of most of European Jewry, and the tragedy that it was brought about because people who had lived there, namely the Palestinians, many of them were displaced. Partition seemed to be the answer at the time. The Arabs didn't accept it. And the rest we know. Now, of course, it might have been neater and easier if Jews never returned to the land of Israel. Some of our problems would not be there. But the question the Jews ask themselves is: Would that be a model answer? After all that has happened to the people, would not having a place to turn to as their own be the answer? We also have to be aware, from a Jewish point of view, that they read pronouncements—by no means of all Muslims, but some Muslims—including their neighbors, who say, "We will only be satisfied when the Jews go elsewhere." That's the view of the country of Iran. That's the view of the Hamas government of the Palestinians. So I'd like to suggest to you that it's not the occupation of 1967 that has created the problems. There were riots in the 1920s and 1930s. And even if tomorrow the Israelis vacate all the territories, it doesn't mean that the day after, there's going to be peace and harmony, because the history before 1967 shows otherwise. Now let me also say this: I belong to those Jews who are totally opposed to the occupation of the territories conquered in 1967. I believe that it is wrong, not only because of what it does to the occupied, but what it does to the occupiers, in the way it compromises Jewish teachings and Jewish values. So I ally myself with those who, even now, without going back on the history—whose fault that partition didn't take place?—I ally myself with those who say the two-state solution seems to be the answer.

Now, we are talking in the context of religion after September 11. And I don't have to tell you that that situation has exacerbated what's going on in the Middle East and has turned the old enmity into that global war on terror, with the irrhetoric and the mismanagement and all that goes with it. And so I belong to those who in that situation are looking for dialogue. And I'm delighted to be here and to speak, in the hope that we will be able to identify more in the Muslim world, more women and men, who're prepared to dialogue with us. I'm even naïve enough to believe that the recent Lebanon war gives us new opportunities because it has shown to governments, including the government of Israel, that the use of power in itself, that military might in itself doesn't solve anything. And perhaps more diplomacy and a genuine desire to see the other's point of view may. Prayer before politics may become a viable option. Historical and theological considerations may take precedence over political expediency. But that can be done only, if there're partners in dialogue on all sides.

Now you'll tell me and I'll know it, that fanaticism is more prominent in the religious world today, in all the monotheistic religions. We have an expert on the subject in Karen Armstrong. So what I would like to suggest in order to further that dialogue, we probably need the Christian catalysts. My experience of being involved in Muslim-Jewish dialogue for many, many years is that it is extremely difficult. And to the extent that it was at all possible, it has often been facilitated by Christian mediators, or catalysts, what have you.

Now so far, we know that no overarching solution under whatever name has been successful. Therefore, I think what religious dialogue is looking for is what they used to call confidence-building measures, namely, small steps, where religious communities come together and try to create a climate of opinion that, in the end, those in power, often divorced from what happens among the people, will have to take note and do something about it. For it's becoming increasingly clear to women and men in all walks of life, whether their special interest is war and peace, ecology, gender equality or economics, that the desire to dominate in the end destroys dominator and dominated alike. Only cooperation, coexistence, and the determination to seek fulfillment with others, rather than power over others, can save the planet, including the slice of it we call the Middle East. Religion, that is, you and I, have a vital role to play in this historic task. If we don't, our message of peace and love of all God's creatures will ring as hollow as cynics and opponents say it does. Thank you.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

In a few minutes, it's hardly possible to address an issue that's as vast as the Middle East, in the light of religion, this being a congress on religion, and not in the impact of the price of oil and other matters. Many points that were mentioned by the previous speaker need to be thought of in relation to how those very concepts are conceived by the Palestinians and other Muslims and also Arab Christians. First of all, the Palestinians do not forget the 1900-year hiatus

between the time when the Jewish people lived in the land of Israel and the second phase of living in the land of Israel. And during that long time, there were people who lived on that land, and therefore, it's not a question of a people without a land and a land without a people, but two people warring for the same land. And much of the theology of it—because theology under tanks and F-16s takes on a very special character—has been actually mutilated and distorted since 1948. If there's going to be any serious discourse—and there are Jews in Israel and there are Jews in this country, as well as Muslims both here and in the Arab East, who are interested in deeper understanding—these issues must come to the fore. If one presents only one point of view, there's no dialogue, there's no discourse, and we're wasting our time.

Let me begin with one of the most important myths—I don't mean myth in the sense of Mircea Eliade, but myth as a substitute for reality, because true myth is reality—one of the most famous myths, is that the Middle East has always been in turmoil. That's nonsense. The relation between France, Germany, and England has been more in turmoil during the last 400 years than the Middle East. Why do we not look at our history? Before the French cut up Lebanon in order to have a foothold, with the pretext of wanting to protecting the Maronites, Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire. And for centuries ever since the crusaders left, Palestine and Israel, for the most part—I don't say completely—Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived in relative peace. It was much easier to have a picnic between Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem 400 years ago than it was between French and German neighbors in Strasbourg or some place like that. First of all, this has to be made clear—that the tremendous contention we have today has not always been there. It was created on the basis of certain actions that have been taken by powers going back to the colonial period before the twentieth century. Jews have lived with Muslims—I'm an Iranian, I've had a lot of Jewish friends since I was a child and they speak Persian as well as I do and they listen to Persian music like I do and they cook Persian food perhaps even better than my wife—well, not quite—but almost as good. And this idea that there's always been contention is really false. When the Jews were expelled from Andalusia in 1492, they were expelled along with the Muslims, and most of them settled in the Islamic world. And their situation and their history cannot at all be compared with what happened to Judaism for the next 500 years in Europe, even before we get to Hitler. Hitler is just the last phase of many other factors; nobody wants to talk about [what went on before that] but I think that the discussion these things has to be resuscitated.

Next I want to mention something perhaps provocative, the idea that everything always has to do with oil in the Middle East. If Abraham had been told by God to give part of Burma to the Jewish people, and all the oil wells had been discovered in South East Asia, the Middle East would be as peaceful a place as anywhere else on the earth. It would not be what it is today. This is the important issue; the West wanting the oil of the Middle East. Unfortunately, most of the money paid for the oil is not spent appropriately, which makes things much, much more difficult. I hope you understand the allusion that

I'm making, that is, the need to have certain governments in the Middle East who spend most of the money that they receive for the oil back in the West. Otherwise, they'll become known as dictators and terrorists and they get toppled very quickly. Secondly, of course, there's the question of the land, the land which is holy to Judaism and to Islam and to Christianity. It is these issues that must be kept in mind. There's nothing innately warlike in the Middle East, nor is it the fault of the family of religions of Abraham. How many times have you read in the last few decades that there is something wrong with Abrahamic religions? "Look at the people fighting together in Middle East." No one says that about Hinduism and Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where they're killing each other off. That is a question of contention over a piece of land and over power that goes along with it. As I've said, if the oil wells had been discovered in Southeast Asia rather than in West Asia, we would have had the same situation there. So I want to defend Abrahamic faiths, first of all, all three of them. It is not their fault that these contentions are carried out in their names. But it happens that these interests, for both oil and land are turned to where all the three Abrahamic religions are present.

I want to mention another point. Present relations between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are not ideal, but nor are they as bad as some people think, if you take the whole of the global situation into consideration. What exacerbates this relationship is not only those internal contentions of which I spoke, but also two very, very important factors which we need to remember in all honesty. First, invasion always causes reaction, and the Islamic world has been invaded in one form or another for the last few centuries. The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan is only the last phase. No one denies the great tragedy of September 11th, with which this conference began. Three thousand Americans, including over 100 Muslims, lost their lives in that tragedy. But over 100,000 Muslims have lost their lives since then as a result of that tragedy. Over 100,000. Nobody talks about that. That's irrelevant. Because if 100,000 mosquitoes have been killed, it doesn't make the papers exactly. That's the situation in which we live and that causes a reaction. And it is not the opposition of the Islamic world to the West that is causing problems, even by the most extreme Muslims. It is their opposition to the interests of the West in the Islamic world, which does not always accord with the interests of the Islamic peoples. There is no Islamic country that has interests in the Gulf of Mexico. It's not a question of equivalence whatsoever.

And let me also mention this because it is causing a tragedy globally—the War on Terror. The greatest war that should be fought against terror is against our destruction of the environment. We've ten to twenty years left before we destroy ourselves completely. We're terrorizing the environment. We're killing off the world of nature. To forget about all of that reality, and then anyone one doesn't like, to give him the title "terrorist" and start fighting against him, is not going to get us anywhere. We must pay attention to the roots of what brings terrorism about and why is it that certain people are willing to give up their lives. What ideology is it? What worldview is it? These issues have to be confronted and the people of religion should be the very first to do this. I always

say a window of opportunity existed for three weeks after September 11th, when Americans were asking the deep question "Why?" Suddenly, after three weeks, all the windows closed and this became a taboo question. Nobody has the right to ask that question anymore. The fact that I do it is because I'm not a media person nor am I afraid of not getting full professorship. But other people are afraid. Even professors are afraid to speak, whose duty it is to do so. I don't know what the situation is in Canada, but certainly in the United States. And there goes along with this a virulent—I mentioned that the other day—an aggressive, missionary activity which has become exacerbated with the military presence of the so-called alliance of the willing or whatever it is, with United States at the center and England next to it and other smaller countries next to them, that constitute the alliance of the willing. One finds along with the military presence a very virulent missionary activity which only causes extremism. We also see that in Hindu India, not only in the Islamic world. We see it in Hindu India, except there it doesn't have military power behind it. I said jokingly the other day that if we had Bulgarian Orthodoxy preaching in Egypt, it would never cause a reaction. There's no military power behind Bulgaria and the Bulgarian missionaries would be human beings living there like St. Francis of Assisi who went to Tunisia in the thirteenth century. But today, this is not the case at all, and we have a kind of aggressive impingement upon the Islamic world, which is causing so many of the reactions that people in the West are trying to solve, without paying attention to the forces that cause those reactions, that to which we have to pay attention.

Finally, the last point because each of us has only a few minutes. In contrast to the idea of the rabbi friend, I do believe there should be direct Jewish-Muslim dialogue. I've been a pioneer in ecumenical discussions before most of you in this room were born. I was president of the Harvard Islamic Society in my early twenties, the very first Islamic society on an American campus established in the '50s, when I was invited to participate in Morocco in a Muslim-Christian dialogue. And I participated in a lot in the so-called trilogue—this word is a bastard word in the English language, but everybody understands it to mean a dialogue of the three Abrahamic religions, because anyway, in the 1960s, an attempt was made by the then Pope just a few months before the 1967 war to have a very secret meeting between leading Jewish figures, including Teddy Kollek, who was then the mayor of Jerusalem, and Muslims and Catholics and a few Protestants. And he brought people like Scholem—a very great Jewish figure—to that meeting. Most people were somewhat afraid to go, but I went. And you had sharpshooters from ceilings and so forth and so on. The Catholic Church was trying to become the mediator for dialogue between Muslims and Jewish people. Unfortunately, that fizzled out. It didn't work out. But since then, there have been some dialogues. And I think in the same way that Jews and Christians need to have a dialogue without the presence of Muslims, and Christians and Muslims without Judaism, because they all have their own particular theological problems, there's nothing more important than a direct Muslim-Jewish dialogue. It's remarkable how similar the two religions are, from

the meat they eat to the burial of their dead, and everything in between. And that, I think, is a very important step, despite the tragedies that happened in the last month or two—all the civilian killing in Lebanon, and, to a lesser extent, in Israel, all of these tragedies. Dialogue is in fact still going on in a very secret way. And I think for an international conference on religion, it is very important to emphasize that this is needed as much as the other kinds of dialogue and within the matrix of more general dialogue between the three children of Abraham. Thank you.

Gregory Baum

I would make three remarks. The first one: the present conflict is to a large extent the result of policies devised by Western powers. Here, I must disagree a little with my friend Rabbi Marmur. The Zionist movement started at the end of the nineteenth century. It was, at that time, supported by a minority of Jews. The Orthodox said, "No, we are a people in a religious sense, but not in a political sense." The Jewish middle classes in Western Europe were assimilating and they wanted to be good citizens of their country and they thought that to be a good Jew meant to testify to justice and seeking the truth. The socialist Jews, both in Eastern Europe and the West, wanted to transform society. There was little sympathy for Zionism. This can be documented. It was only after the Holocaust that the majority of Jews and the great majority of Western peoples believed that the Jews needed a house against death and, therefore, they supported the state of Israel.

Secondly, the history of the Arab people has also been shaped by Western political policies. If you look at the history of colonialism, it began in Algeria in the 1830s, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, faraway India, and then, after the First World War, the colonial mandates of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. No wonder that the Arabs considered the creation of Israel as part of the wave of colonization that had come down on them, especially since it was the British imperial government that made the Balfour Declaration in 1917. The alternative interpretation of history by Arabs and by Israel is due to the impact of Western powers. I make this remark because many of the conflicts in the world have been generated by Western policies, especially by the colonial conquest of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

I want to mention a second difficulty. Another enormous difficulty is that Israel and Palestine belong to different cultural spheres. Israel has become a Western society, industrially developed, familiar with capitalism, advanced in the sciences, having a large middle class, and enjoying a European standard of living. By contrast, the Palestinians belong to a much poorer, more traditional society with a communal inheritance and cultural values at odds with Western modernity. The Israeli-Palestinian encounter is, in a certain sense, a conflict between two worlds, often called the developed and the developing world. Westerners are not impressed by countries with a Muslim majority because they do so very little to remedy the widespread poverty. And

conversely, Arabs and many Asian people think that the cultural experiment of Western nations has become materialistic, dominated by market values, and bereft of ethical norms. The difference in cultural vision makes an understanding between Israelis and Palestinians difficult.

The third remark. There will be no peace in the Middle East as long as Palestine is occupied by the state of Israel. Military occupation of other countries has always produced counterinsurgency and acts of violence. Occupation produces arrogance and cruelty in the occupier and resistance, rage and violence in the occupied. In Europe, the model for this is the British conquest of Ireland and the British settlements in the northern part of that island. Here, arrogance, cruelty, exclusion on the one hand, and resistance, rage, and violence on the other. This has gone on for generations. According to an article in yesterday's *Le Devoir,* the peace agreement is again being questioned in Northern Ireland. I believe it is common sense to recognize that there can be no peace in the Middle East as long as the occupation of Palestine lasts. As long as it lasts, there'll be continued acts of violence among the occupied people, foolish and criminal acts of terrorism which serve no political purpose, which kill and maim innocent people, and which provoke military retaliation.

The next remark. There are Jews in Israel and America who oppose the occupation and illegal settlements on Palestinian territory. And we heard that Rabbi Marmur, too, agrees that the occupation has to stop. The Christians who have been involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue and have wrestled against Christian anti-Semitism are often put on the e-mail lists of Jewish peace and human rights groups in Israel and North America. These Christians admire Judaism and recognize the spiritual richness of Jewish traditions, religious and secular. I receive almost daily messages and articles written by Jewish human rights activists in Israel. These men and women are Jewish Israelis who love their country and want Israel to thrive. At the same time, they are opposed to the occupation of Palestine and the Jewish settlements on the conquered territories. They criticize the expansionist policies of their government. They want Israel to respect the resolutions of the United Nations and to return to the 1967 borders. And they support the Palestinian right to self-determination. These activists think of themselves as reformed Zionists or post-Zionists. They want to live in peace, friendship, and cooperation with their neighbors.

The voices of these people are hardly ever heard. The press coverage of terrorism gives them no space. They are easy to find on the Internet. If you were to Google and look for Gush-Shalom, a radical peace movement in Israel, and then you click "links," you'll find a long list of Jewish human rights organizations in Israel and in America opposed to the occupation and the settlements. They refute the argument of the Israeli government that it had no trustworthy Palestinian partner with whom to negotiate. Here is just an example. The Web site of the Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel presented a list of the human rights violations in the occupied territories. It mentions

expropriation of land, demolition of houses, uprooting of trees, confiscation of identity cards to remove rights of residents, the use of torture to obtain information, demeaning and humiliating Palestinians, double standard in judging the violence committed by the occupied and the occupier, excessive force used by the military, sometimes shooting to kill, imprisonment without trial. You find this on their Web site. Another example: in an article in *Haaretz,* an Israeli newspaper, of September 4th, 2006, an article written by Danny Rubenstein calls for a commission to investigate human rights violations and the oppressive conditions in the occupied territories, which have been getting worse over the years. He writes: "During the past two months, July and August, 251 Palestinians were killed in Gaza and the West Bank, all of them by Israeli Defense Force fire. About half of them were civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. More Palestinians than Israelis were killed during the war in Lebanon, even though the Palestinians did not participate in the war." Now these are examples. If you're interested, you go to the Internet and you can find Jewish descriptions of a group called PAJU, uniting Jews and Palestinians in the common name of peace, the end of the occupation and the closure of the illegal settlements. You can find their platform on the Internet.

These groups complain that the large Jewish organizations in America accuse critics of the Israeli government as anti-Semitic and call Jews critical of Israel "self-hating Jews." Reading newspapers and reviews, I have the impression that, after the bombing of Lebanon, this strategy no longer works. Jews, Muslims, and Christians believe in the God of Abraham. We all depend on God's mercy. We all pray that God may lead us to reconciliation. And because we believe in God, we will not despair, but live in hope. Thank you.

Karen Armstrong

We've had some very eloquent and passionate discussions of the history of this conflict. I myself have become a historian and I'm aware of the real complexity of these historical issues, which are not always understood by people who take violent, aggressive positions either for or against, on one side or the other, in the West. And I think there's been now a history of pain in this region for a hundred years and history is part of each side's identity. It has become a narrative of pain, and the historical gives it, in the full sense of the word, mythical significance. But what we're going to do now, because this summer we've seen the conflict rising to appalling levels.... Nobody can be happy with what has happened this summer. And this conflict was originally a secular conflict on both sides. Zionism was initially a secular movement, a rebellion against religious Judaism, and opposed by most Orthodox rabbis. And the Palestinian movement was also secular. The PLO consisted of Christians as well as Muslims and therefore the secular option was almost essential for it. But, over the years, unfortunately, this conflict has been allowed to fester and go on. It has been sacralized on both sides with a species of what we call fundamentalist religion and has become a symbol, something more, something greater than itself. And

this also pertains in the West, where people look at the thing with mythical spectacles, instead of seeing things as they are.

Fundamentalist movements almost always have a symbolic issue that seems to reflect everything that's gone wrong in the world. In the United States, among the Christian Right, that issue is abortion or evolution. These issues are not discussed scientifically. They are each surrounded with a nimbus of evil. They seem to sum up everything that has gone wrong in the modern world, and the murderous, aggressive, soulless aspects of modernity. Now, in the Jewish world, the state of Israel, either for or against, has been at the root of every single fundamentalist movement. Some Jewish fundamentalists are passionately for the state of Israel, the secular state of Israel which they see as sacred. Others see the state of Israel as at best a neutral value. And some even see it as evil, because it is secularizing in their view an important religious symbol in Judaism. In the Muslim world too, the situation of the Palestinians has become a symbol of everything that has gone wrong in the modern world—the sense of powerlessness among Muslims, the sense of frustration. The knowledge that thousands of people could be displaced, while the world stood by ad did nothing. The issue has, therefore, become larger than itself and is now surrounded with an aura of absolute wrong. And finally, among Christians in the United States, the state of Israel has become symbolic too. As you know, the Christian Right believes the Jews must be in their land before Jesus can return. So they are passionate supporters of the state of Israel. But it is also a very anti-Semitic ideology because when anti-Christ appears and inaugurates the last day, he's going to slaughter all the Jews who refuse baptism in the land.

So it's very difficult for any of us to see these issues correctly. And I've traveled around the United States and I'm sometimes appalled by the ignorance. People say to me, "Well, where did Palestinians come from?"—and these are university professors. And I said, "Palestine, of course," and they look absolutely astonished. Now, the peace will be made here, I think, in the West. I think the West has a huge responsibility. I agree with all that's been said about the West's contribution to this, especially the contribution of Great Britain to this conflict. But we have to understand that whatever happened in the past, there are now two peoples in that land. The Jewish state is there. It is de facto. But the Palestinian movement is there, de facto. Palestinians are not going to go away. And we know from our religious traditions that however holy a land can be, if there's no justice, there's no real holiness. This goes right back to the Psalms, the ancient Psalms of Israel, which said that unless there was *tseddeq,* (justice) in the Land, there could be no *shalom,* no peace, no holiness. And that is the challenge for us today.

I think we have to see that fundamentalist movements—I don't like that term, but we've only got a few minutes—fundamentalist movements are all rooted in fear of annihilation. The Jewish people have experienced near annihilation in Europe. The Palestinian people constantly have a sense of annihilation, a sense that they'd be wiped off the map. And when these movements are attacked—this is a historical fact—they always become more extreme. So going to war to

make peace or attacking extremist movements will be counterproductive. It will only lead to more extremity. Policies have to work. You can have very, very principled policies, but if they're not working, then they're useless. And certainly, you'd be hard put to say that whatever policies are being adopted in the Middle East, are they working? No. And this cycle of war is increasing the problem. It increases the sense of extremism. Osama bin Laden, for example, who had no interest whatever, I believe, in the Palestinian problem originally, knows his audience and knows this is a symbolic issue and he uses it to demonstrate his good credentials. We must find a solution. There'll be no peace in the world unless there is a peace solution for Palestine.

And this is a religious question. It may be a secular conflict, but we need a change of heart—all of us, not just pointing our finger at the other, but all of us. The great prophets of Israel made it clear that, when Israel was threatened with annihilation way back in the eighth, seventh, sixth centuries BCE, it was no good just blaming the enemy. The prophets of Israel said, "Look to your own behavior. Look to your own heart." Jesus said, "Don't look at the splinter in your neighbour's eye and neglect the beam in your own." Always self-criticism. And that means all of us have to engage in that, including the Western countries, and examine our own predispositions toward one side or the other, because the thing is getting out of hand and is threatening world peace.

Secondly, when I spoke on the first night of the conference, I mentioned the golden rule: "Don't do to others what you would not have done to you." If politicians observed this rule, the world would be a better place. And that's not a simple thing to do. You have to look carefully at your own history of pain and then say, "Do you want to inflict this on anybody else?" We've all now been experiencing terrorism and violence and hatred and danger and fear. Do we want, even in a passive way, to inflict this on anybody else? We need to start to think again.

One of the other great religious principles is to see things as they are, not how you feel they ought to be, but as they really are. So you need to have a dispassionate reporting, fair, impartial reporting of events in the Middle East which is not always done—maybe, I don't know about Canada so much. But certainly, in the United Kingdom and the United States, the reporting is not always fair. So we need to see things as they are because we cannot hope to bring peace to the world unless we sort out this problem, and that means absolute respect for all the parties involved, and an acknowledgment that we Westerners carry a responsibility for what has happened. And we bear a great responsibility to help these people to live together in peace. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Question: I spent the war in Lebanon in Tibet, of all places. I was reminded, while the violence was going on, that anger, rage, and violence are not the only possibility by means of which we can respond to occupation. And that has led me to think about the question that goes beyond looking at the issue of

justice—Who is right? Who is wrong? Who did this? Who did that?—we also have to discuss how do our religions equip us to respond to the challenges of what happens. A presentation that says "Jews occupy and we understand the rage of the other side" is by nature one-sided. We have to look at the question in what way do all our religions bring out the best in us? What type of religious response do they condition? I cannot speak for Islam—let someone else do that. I'll only share a brief point regarding Jewish responses to bus bombings. The usual Jewish response has been, a bus explodes, we blame the others, we'll go get them. When a bus exploded in an ultraorthodox Jewish community, the communal response was to say, "What have we done wrong? What is God telling us? How can we be transformed?" If all of us can galvanize our forces, not to blame, not to seek justice, but to seek the kind of self-transformation through religious response, we may be able to bring out the best in our traditions.

Question: My question is to Ms. Armstrong. My name is Abram Allen. I'm from Paducah, Kentucky, U.S.A. I wish I could recall my namesake here, Abraham, to moderate what we consider tonight, for what we're experiencing in the Middle East is a struggle for truth possession, that is, the aggressor's right and defender's truth.

Armstrong: Is there a subject, any subject at all?

Question: Is there any subject that can possess truth?

Armstrong: This might be a little deep for me. I think we always have to understand that our understanding is partial and always conditioned by how we've been brought up, by our sympathies—our national sympathies, our cultural sympathies. And I don't believe, for example, that any one religious maxim or doctrine ever has the entire truth about God, because God is transcendent. And certainly, I don't like the idea of possession, because it suggests my truth and not anybody else's truth. Truth is not possessed. I don't like the idea of possessing truth. I don't like the idea of truth ever being summed up in a single maxim. We're always striving to achieve greater insight into truth. And I think in this situation, we have not always been looking for truth. We've been looking for proof-texts and justifications.

Nasr: Very quickly, Christ said, "I am the Way, the Life and the Truth," so no religious person as a Christian can negate the possibility of truth with a capital T. And in Islam, one of the names of God is Al-Haqq, the truth. And since everything is created by God, truth manifests itself on all levels of reality, which does not mean there are not different interpretations and different perspectives on something which is true. I don't think it is at all possible to have a serious religious engagement without accepting the truth on some level. But that does not mean my subjective appraisal of something that's true is the truth as such. Ms. Armstrong quoted a verse which really is a saying of the Prophet of Islam: "Oh Lord, show us things as they really are," which is a prayer of the Prophet to be shown things as they really are. It doesn't mean in human

experience there are no things that reveal themselves as they really are; it means that we usually have a slanted, subjective perspective which prevents us from seeing things as they really are. But there are things as they really are, and that's where the truth lies.

Marmur: Just a comment. In Jewish tradition, God's seal is truth. Human beings cannot attain it. Our problem is we settle for certainty and certainty includes everything else. And we then go blindfolded into the world and make any kind of dialogue impossible. Please note that the four presenters today, there's really a lot of consensus here. There's a lot of agreement. We could sit down and spend hours and come to that kind of agreement. It is when we believe with certainty that what we are saying is the only thing possible that we get into trouble.

Question: Just a short question on the role of the media in misrepresenting Middle Eastern religion. We always get the impression that Arabic Islam is different from Islam elsewhere. There's this idea that the media is playing up the misrepresentation of religion in the media in relation to the Middle Eastern conflict. I was wondering if anybody would like to take that up, because we really get the impression that religion in the Middle East is different... A Christian in the Middle East is different than he is here. A Muslim is different in Lebanon than he would be in Tunisia. We get this impression.... I personally think the media is being irresponsible in presenting religion.

Baum: I agree with you that the media misrepresents religion very often. That is, the media in a capitalist society, newspapers have to survive, and therefore they have to sell their newspapers, and therefore don't blame them if they say we need sensation in order to sell our newspapers. Isn't that the market virtue? It's the system that demands that they constantly think of market principles. And therefore if there's violence between religions, it is immediately reported. If a hundred rabbis and imams meet in Morocco for peaceful conversation and to find a common ground, this is never mentioned. The same is true of the reporting on religion, certainly on Islam. The caricature that Muslims and Islam are suffering at this time is scandalous. There's research done on this. Professor Rachad Antonius has done research on this. He has looked at television, the newspapers, and so on. This is quite scandalous, the distortions of Islam that's taking place. But this is true of Judaism and Christianity, too. It is the sensation that matters, the bizarre aspects of religion that make the newspapers. But upon reflection, it's very [dangerous].

Nasr: A very quick comment. What he said is completely right, but the needs of the market do not seem to apply to Judaism and Christianity. They only apply to Islam. Because of the political correctness which is now very dominant, no newspaper in the United States would dare criticize Judaism or Christianity or African-Americans. The only open field is Muslims and Arabs. So it's not only a question of the market. It's something else that is involved.

Armstrong: I would agree with that. We've just seen this disgraceful business of the Danish cartoons. The newspaper had refused a caricature of Jesus earlier but was quite happy to go ahead. . . . This I've been aware of for years, and it's what got me into all this in the first place, because it strikes me that once you start thinking routinely in a distorted way about a people, you are heading for a great darkness. We saw that in the 1930s in Europe and I've been very concerned about the matter that Prof. Nasr has just explained so well.

Question: My question is more philosophical and it's addressed to all the panelists. I'd like to thank all of you for your contributions here tonight. In your respective opinions, what is the importance of the challenge of different groups of people who interpret their sacred texts as well as their understanding of their own national identities in essentialist ways, i.e., ways that are often interpreting texts and notions of identities in literalist ways but end up excluding others?

Nasr: I know where you're coming from. Once you said "essentialist," that means postmodernism, which refutes the possibility of any innate truth to any text. Texts are related to power structures, and once you interpret something as having an essence, you in a sense have absolutized it and that is what postmodern philosophy is against. Now, I'm not going to debate with you and Derrida about this matter. What I want to say is that those who are literalists in their interpretation of their scriptures are not necessarily the same people who are violent, who are terrorists and the like. Literalism is a way of defense when one's religious identity is being diluted. In traditional Christianity, as well as traditional Islam and Judaism, you had over the centuries commentators who were literalists, those who were mystical, those who were theological, those who were philosophical. You have all kinds of comments about the Qur'an, the Torah, the Bible, and so forth and so on. What has happened today is quite something else, to which she [Armstrong] drew attention. And that is that you have a kind of literalism which is based on the fear of extinction, and therefore poses itself as the antipode of all this postmodern textual study that goes on in Western universities and has been going on in America in the last two or three decades.

Baum: I too have little sympathy for certain postmodern trends. There's no access to truth. There're just different stories, different spins. Each person looks at the matter from a different point of view. There's no truth. I mean, this is used by Holocaust deniers. They say that, "Yes, many people think there was a Holocaust. I think I can give another interpretation. This never really happened. The Jews were put into hotels and they didn't really suffer." So I'm extremely nervous about the idea that you can't really find historical truth. I mean, I don't want to give a lecture against postmodern thought at this time, but I think it's worth saying that this is very dangerous territory.

Armstrong: Just to give you a quick story. A couple of years ago, I was giving a lecture and a policeman came up to me and told me that because a young man

had read my book on the Buddha and had marked it heavily on an airplane journey, and had then gone, as a result of that, and killed his parents and then killed himself. Now, this is what can be done with a text. When I told this story to somebody, their response was, "Thank goodness the young man didn't pick up a copy of the Bible, because then it probably could have been a massacre." But if you can do something like that with Buddha—nonviolent, compassionate Buddha—it's what you bring to these texts that count. And in previous years, before the invention of printing, before everybody put out their own Bible, people listened to their texts. And they didn't just pick out their favorite bits here and there and sling them together to create their own religions. They had to take the whole and listen to it and had an entirely different relationship with scripture. But now we're all making our own religions. And furthermore, it's amazing how many Western people feel that they are absolute authorities on the Qur'an. [They consider it an] absolutely violent text, and you say, "Hello, what about the book of Joshua? Or the book of Revelation?" They don't like that either. They don't see it. So I think we have to really think to try to get back to what we mean by a sacred text, how complicated it is, that it does not give us simple answers to hugely complex questions.

Question: What does overpopulation have to do with this problem? Armstrong told us back in Mississippi that the Palestinians have about twice as many children as the Israelis, so that's why I'm asking.

Armstrong: I think what you may be referring to is the demographic problem. Rabbi, is this not a problem that people are concerned about in Israel? That they will soon have a Palestinian majority and the country will be oppressed by a [former] minority? I think that's what you are referring to. But I don't think you meant this is overpopulation. The Palestinians do tend to have more children than Israelis, and many Israelis are concerned about this. But the issue is an issue of justice rather than just demographics, I think.

Question: This is a question that came from a point that Karen Armstrong raised, but I suppose anyone can comment on it. You said that all fundamentalism comes out of fear. Could you comment on what is the fear of Christian fundamentalism? What feeds the fear of annihilation in Christian fundamentalism?

Armstrong: Even in the United States, there are Christians in what we would call "small-town" America who feel colonized by the, to them, alien ethos of Harvard, Yale, or Washington and feel that the modern liberal voice is drowning out what they regard as true faith and they feel that their whole faith is in jeopardy. Most fundamentalism—and this includes fundamentalism in the United States—begins with what is perceived to be an attack by an aggressive secularism or an aggressive liberalism. That's what happened in the churches at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the liberals started vilifying the conservatives and they became more conservative and started to fight back to defend what they regard as the true faith. In the course of defending it,

however, you inevitably start getting distortions, because people start getting defensive. But that's what it is.

Question: At other conferences, I've heard that the ambiance of power is one of the obstacles to negotiation and dialogue. I wonder if someone could speak to that. It comes in part from the belief that Israel has United States with it, and therefore there's an imbalance.

Baum: Yes, I think it is obviously true that sometimes our newspapers speak as though Israel and Palestine are two equal quantities and they are in conflict. This is not true at all. Israel is very powerful and has powerful arms and Palestine is very weak in arms. Even the suicide bombers... They wouldn't do this if they had tanks. They do it obviously because they don't have weapons. The question is quite right. The policy of the United States could have been to promote dialogue and promote negotiation and demand some kind of settlement. But the United States policy, certainly of the present administration, has been to support Israel in its expansionist policies. So I do think there's a great deal of inequality.

Nasr: Every dialogue presumes either a person or an organization behind the dialogue. And every dialogue, even concerning the price of oil in OPEC, not only grand religious or political issues, is always unequal if one side is much more powerful than the other. The reason that a country like Iran—I don't think it wants to, but here people say that it wants to—wants to have the nuclear bomb is because those countries which do, when they sit around the table, cause the whole tenor of discussion to be very different. They dominate over those who don't, even if the discussion were to concern mining tin in Indonesia or something like that. So there's no doubt about it that the lack of equality or parity in power structures affects very much the result of any dialogue and for any subject.

Question: You are a distinguished panel of experts in the history on your land. My question is simple and difficult. I am a follower of Gandhi and I also believe in Bhagavadgita, where Krishna had acknowledged a just war. My question is based on the premise which has already been discussed by the panel: How can this panel challenge yourself to bring the two parties on the discussion table for a dialogue? Otherwise, this is a fruitless discussion, because this is not going to reach the parties which are going to be deciding.

Armstrong: I think there is an avoidance of this issue among the powers that be. You're constantly hearing President Bush saying this Palestinian problem is not a cause of the rising tide of extremism in the world, not the source of all our difficulties. Mr. Blair, to his shame, says the same. I think there needs to be more recognition that this is a major problem and I think that the Western powers should inaugurate a really unbiased dialogue. But it's difficult. In Northern Ireland, it took us years. You have to be prepared to talk to everybody. "We don't talk to terrorists," etc. This is all very well. But in Northern Ireland, people were talking to terrorists—the so-called terrorists, the IRA—sub-rosa.

And it was these discussions that eventually led them to the extraordinary moment when they were all sitting around the table together. So I think there needs to be more real taking into cognizance the other point of view. The United States, for example, needs to have a much more unbiased attitude, and to see that, and to really try to understand what some of the Palestinians and some of their supporters are trying to say, often in an aggressive way. Look at the underlying content of the rhetoric.

Nasr: Time is running out very quickly, but I see a gentleman asked what we as panelists can do. I think the best we can do next time is for Prof. Sharma to get suicide bombers and drivers and pilots of F-16s from Israel together and we'll talk to both of them. But before we get there, I believe that the expression of truth on another level itself has unforeseen consequences. That is something in the nature of reality. Of course, people in this room, none of them is going to make major decisions for the United States or Canada or the Arab world or Israel. But, nevertheless, like a wave that ripples along, there's a ripple effect, and that's the best that we can hope for. Otherwise, we have to follow the advice which remains in my ear when, in 1957, the great French Orientalist and Catholic thinker, Louis Massignon, made a remarkable comment. This being Montreal, I'll quote it first in French and then in English—Il a dit, "c'est trop tard pour les congrès; ce qui est important maintenant, c'est la prière du coeur." That is, it's too late for congresses. Now, the only thing that counts is the prayer of the heart. We take that advice to heart or do the best that we can in the hope that this will gradually reach a wider audience.

Baum: I mean, the panelists can do something. I'm a member of a church. Churches take public positions, and therefore I belong to circles and groups in churches that try to influence the policies that the church adopts. And this could have an influence on public opinion and eventually even affect the government.

Question: I'm Daniel Helminiak from the University of West Georgia in the United States and I'm embarrassed to make this point. For the sake of seeing what's really happening. . . . I've heard these stories. Is there any factuality to it? What can you say about it, even for the level of true believers in the White House, this issue about the Apocalypse and wanting to bring it on because of the return of Christ, in the States?

Nasr: Very quickly, this is a heresy, from the point of traditional Catholicism or Protestantism. I'm not a Christian. I'm a Muslim. But allow me to say that even from the point of Islam, to try to force God's hand, to try to force God's will is a great sin. All the three monotheisms believe in a messianic event at the end of the world, but have said that only God knows when that will occur. So I see this as nothing more than a politicization of a very profound and important Christian doctrine.

Baum: I agree with this. Whether these rumors are true I don't know. I don't have any connection with the White House at all. But there are certainly

authors in the United States who write books on these things. There's no doubt about this. How far they influence policy, this I cannot say.

Armstrong: I think this reflects a mood. I think President Bush comes from a sort of fundamentalist background. He depends upon that kind of constituency. The whole package of Christian Right ideas is very congenial to the administration. Whether he actually believes that he is the president who is going to lead us to rapture remains to be seen. But you're right. This is a heresy. The point is, however, whether this hard-line rapture theology is right or not, diluted versions of it come down among believers, and this also affects the mood to which the administration is responding.

Nasr: The question of leading us to rapture or rupture. . . .

Question: I wish I could pass on the same message which I gave in this conference about ahimsa, nonabsolutism and nonattachment, and you panelists can take this message further out and take this message for further nonviolence and bring about peace and justice everywhere. I would like to make a last announcement over here that we have a concert in the next room and we're going to have a concert on interfaith dance. I hope all of you can join us. Thank you.

Question: My name is Lyndon Harris. I was the priest in charge of St. Paul's Chapel, which is right across from the World Trade Center site. We ran relief operation there after the attacks on September 11th and also spent a lot of time on the site doing blessings and prayers on body-bags and, Dr. Armstrong, I remember with great fondness you were with us. I'm now working with an organization called the Garden of Forgiveness. It's based on the original Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon, and we want to advance the cause of forgiveness around the world. And we want to invite every community to plant your own Garden of Forgiveness, because we believe that forgiveness is a way for us to break the cycle of violence, retribution, revenge and a way to redress, in some measure, the motivating factors behind terrorism, the shame and all of that. I wonder if each of you would have a minute to make a comment about the role forgiveness can play in breaking the cycle of violence and helping us move on toward creating the future.

Baum: I assure you this is terribly important, but forgiveness doesn't dispense you from restitution.

Question: Neither does it exclude or preclude justice.

Baum: Yes, that's right. In other words, forgiveness doesn't dispense you from restitution. And so I think this cannot be used. . . . I mean, forgiveness can be used ideologically as a way to maneuver people away from making just claims. So I think I'm all for forgiveness, but I'm worried about the ideological use of it.

Nasr: In Islam, of course, one of the names of God is the forgiver, Al-Ghafur and in most parts of the Islamic world, Muslims use the invocation of

Al-Ghafur everyday. Yet some of them forget that this must be applied also to life. God forgives us. And if we are his vicegerents on earth, we have the duty to forgive others to the extent that we can. And I think that that works on an individual basis, rather on a social, collective basis. That is the problem. Most societies have not practiced forgiveness as a collectivityduring most of their history. But if individuals have and do, especially in the present situation we have in, I think that they can play a very important role.

Armstrong: I think the Garden of Forgiveness is a wonderful idea. I'd just like to take the line from the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Remember, we've trespassed, too, so that when we're forgiving others, we are not doing so in a position of absolute righteousness and graciously handing out forgiveness, but that we realize our own culpability, that it usually takes two to tango, two to reach a hideous conflict—more than two—and that as we forgive others, we would recognize our own part in creating the situation of pain and suffering and cruelty.

16

Religion and Media

Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi

I believe all those who have had "religion" or "the media" as their field of study or area of experience, in recent years, especially after the bitter catastrophe of September 11, are faced with two essential questions:

1. Why have the borders of religious "difference" become more prominent and why have the identity factors become clearer?
2. How can the media diminish religious alienation and support interreligious dialogue?

On account of my personal experience in the media (radio, television, the press, and weblogs) and also my involvement and employment in "the dialogue of cultures and civilizations" and "interfaith dialogue," I am trying to account for these two questions.

1. September 11 signaled a new danger to our world: the danger of legitimizing identities transforming into resistance identities. Legitimizing identities can be constructed by influential cultural institutions such as religion, and be spread by social activists and through rational synergies. However, resistance identities are normally formed in dangerous unstable situations by excluded groups. Resistance identity is, in fact, a kind of extremist violent self-expression in circumstances where the possibility of peaceful and dialogue-based relations is denied. The event of September 11 is a consequence of the expression of resistance identity or more appropriately the reflection of violence and terrorism in the cast of fundamentalism. Such a type of fundamentalism can be explained and analyzed within the framework of the same process mentioned regarding identity.

Divine religions, by reason of their strong bonds with man's nature, can construct his legitimizing identity both in his individual and social sides. The issue has started from where, instead of fulfilling this critical role, religion has taken form as "resistance identity." "Resistance identity" is a social construction and is a product of unjust political, economical, and cultural changes worldwide.

"Resistance identity" can be constructed with religious, ethnical, national, and even gender-related bricks. In today's globalized world, we are seeing violent extremist types of alienation, narcissism, and fundamentalist religious, national, ethnic gender-related phobias which, near and far, have tightened the ring of dialogue, tolerance, and coexistence in the world. These alienations, phobias, and narcissisms, although more dangerous when religious, are not limited to religion in the first place and moreover are not limited to a specific religion. The roots of their construction and aggravation cannot be narrowed down to religion in general or any particular religion. September 11 proved that the most advanced parts of the current civilization are prone to harm from its most marginalized parts and the source of this vulnerability should be found in different layers of politics, culture, and economy. The power of "identity," if understood clearly, is a destructive one under any given title including religion, nationalism, ethnicity, or gender.

Globalization and inclination toward universal features is only one of the directions of today's world. The other direction is localization and the growth of particularistic features. Religion, politics, culture, and economy should think up solutions between these two worlds. Inclusivism and exclusivism are two different approaches that can involve religion as well as politics, economy, and culture. The first approach does not view its borders of difference as closed and rigidified and believes in a flexible dynamic identity. However, the second approach defines its borders of difference as separation and distance from the others and relies on a violent fundamentalist identity. The world can have a dominant inclusivist direction, whereas after September 11 it has unfortunately had an exclusivist direction. The media can work to weaken or strengthen any of these directions as well.

2. After September 11, most media have functioned to strengthen the points of difference or violent identity-forming aspects. Such a function can be the consequence of various factors: firstly, the violent frightening voice of fundamentalism has been a very loud voice which has reached ears more quickly and clearly than the soft peacemaking voice of religions. Secondly, religious fundamentalists, unlike traditionalists, have made wide use of new technology and media and, as a result, the level of dominance of fundamentalist leaders such as Bin Laden and Zawahiri over the new media spaces and tools has unprecedentedly increased in the recent years. Thirdly, international media, due to their press methods, have looked for "oddity" and "conflict" and have, therefore, paid more attention to religious differences than similarities. Fourthly, the media image of the East in the West and the West in the East has been a distorted, caricatured, or at least collaged one than a realistic image in natural proportions. An analysis of the contents of the news conveyed by world's most effective news agencies, the press, radios, and televisions very well proves that Islamophobia, heterophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of alienation have been their dominant characteristic. Nevertheless, in this approach, the role of the element of politics and especially,

the lobby of extremist religious-political groups can be considered prominent and effective.

3. In spite of this distorted image of the element of religion in the contemporary world, we can signify the role of inclusivism and inclination toward openness and dialogue, which is embedded in religion. Basically, religious texts have always provided the grounds for opening doors to dialogue, both in content and form. What religion considers a rule is dialogue and forgiveness and what it considers an exception is conflict. However, fundamentalists and the fundamentalist image of religion are against this old deep-rooted tradition. Human beings, on account of being of the same kind but having differences, turn to dialogue to find their points of similarity and it is natural that the system of religion recognizes this intrinsic disposition. Both in the Holy Bible and the Koran we repeatedly see that we are addressed as "humans." This address elevates us from "individuals" to "persons" or parties of dialogue who are addressed by the holy voice. As said by the Koran, people of hell and torture are those who have been denied the blessing of "listening to the truth and turning to rationality" ([67:10] they also say, "If we heard or understood, we would not be among the dwellers of Hell!"). In the Islamic outlook, inviting others to the truth and guiding them is basically of a dialogue nature. The Holy Koran states [16:125] you shall invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kind enlightenment and debate with them in the best possible manner—best in wisdom.

   Even in other eastern religions we can extensively see the dominance of the wisdom of dialogue over the manner of force and violence. In the book "conversations," Confucius includes different examples of religious grounds for dialogue. In his fourth book "the art of teaching and learning" he states, "he who possesses ethical virtues speaks softly"...this softness and quietness in speech is not an easy thing. In this world, most people are aggressive toward one another. Restraining oneself from excitement, grudge, or aggression is a very difficult task, to relieve oneself from such difficulty there is no other way than speaking quietly and softly. Dialogue, in its modern usage, which is the result of a number of changes in the modern man's epistemological outlooks, also has a privileged status in modern religious literature and in humanistic and democratic versions of religion. Therefore, many contemporary Muslim, Jewish, and Christian theologians have paid a lot of attention to it. Formulation of the idea of dialogue, in its modern sense, can extensively be seen in the works of Muslim thinkers and modern reformists from Iran or other Muslim countries. Christian and Jewish religious philosophers and thinkers have also been effective in the design and promotion of the idea of dialogue.

   Can this religious approach not be an indicator of inclusivism and inclination toward dialogue in religions? Why has the rough rootless voice of the fundamentalists shadowed the noble soft voice of the dialogue? Replacing this voice of violence with a soft voice is the task of religious media in our current world. But, unfortunately, there are not so many media that care about this important duty and those which do care are rarely heard.

4. Can international dialogues, considering the political restrictions they have, give open, pluralist, multiminded behavioral patterns a chance to be expressed? My answer to this question draws upon the new role of the media in the communication age and the manifestation of a positive network society.

Turning to "dialogue" with an all-inclusive humanistic approach is considered the dominant argument in the cultural domain. This argument is mostly based upon common global issues and "collective fears and hopes of man in today's society." In this assemblage of dialogue, although there is little reliance on "state-nations," there is far more reliance on "humanity" in its universal sense, units smaller than a government such as civic societies and units larger than a government such as cultures and civilizations. The culture in this pattern has taken a basic role and there is more emphasis on cultural bonds than on political ties. The cultural turn to the pattern of dialogue and the stress on "networks" instead of monodirectional vertical relations has created the possibility of dialogue and manifestation of the inclusivist direction of religions.

In fact, reorganization of the global order is beyond dialogue in the real world and will not occur unless the world is viewed as [consisting of] different cultural and social networks.

5. In order for us to reach "communicative understanding" we should put more emphasis on "communicative competence." By communicative competence I do not only mean the techniques of the media and competence in the communicative language. Communicative competence means finding enough cultural competence in communication with our surrounding world and different minds and purposes. We are required to understand each culture internally and from within that culture in order to discover the language of dialogue with it.

   This communicative competence is required for the fulfillment and maintenance of equal dialogue between religions, cultures, and civilizations. The dialogue nature and features of each religion, civilization, or culture are important. However, the way this nature and these features are interpreted, explained and, most importantly, understood by the parties is of more significance. "Communicative understanding" and "communicative competence" are among those synergies that can be used by the media in a way to pinpoint and strengthen dialogue values and traditions that are embedded in each religion, and to fortify the ethics of dialogue.
6. Global communicative media and tools, contrary to the universal human disposition that is against violence, have raced each other to aggravate violence and have practically been in the service of the growth of religious violence. Violence-seeking religious leaders have also used this possibility to organize extremist religious forces and introduce exclusivist figures, who automatically find the required charisma and attraction, as models and profited from the media that constantly prefer violence to other news and tend to expand the radius of violence. In the West, exclusivist churches took advantage of the media and made Islamophobia the main seat of the western mentality and in the Muslim society, as well, extremist movements profited from the media and aggravated the fear of the West. This race has escalated to pose the future of humanity a much higher danger than that of September 11.

   At this juncture, as religion strengthened and formed bonds with the media, extremist religious leaders found it easier to make instrumental use of religion. Nevertheless, making instrumental use of religion and religious emotions to the political advantage of the strong is neither so complicated nor new. Although this dangerous game has always been started by political planners, it has never ended with its initial starters. An example of this would be Afghanistan, where the West organized the Muslims to overthrow the Soviet

Union during the Cold War and meanwhile talked of Afghan guerilla fighters (the Mujahedeen) with high reverence. However, when political goals of the West were fulfilled the movement of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan gave birth to the Taliban and al-Qaeda and this trend was not ended until the catastrophe of September 11.

Religious authorities and owners of the media should work hand in hand to replace the exclusivist religion with the inclusivist religion. Because advertising violence under the name of religion, more than anything else, causes religious values to lose color and is to the disadvantage of the shared religious essence, which has been sent down by God to carry the message of peace and life. Because most of the people who are interested in staying religious as well as living without violence will almost certainly sacrifice religiousness for better living.

7. The ethics of dialogue do not suggest negative tolerance but positive opposition and this is the essence of divine religions and the spiritual disposition. Only for the sake of observing dialogue ethics one should not just bear the others but work with them. Dialogue ethics, however, is a part of the current world's urbanization and the foundation for democratic ties. This urbanization enables members of the society to listen to one another, and drives the political culture toward mutual respect, social and political contribution, freedom, and observing the essential rights of the others.

   Such urbanization requires powerful civic institutions, media and ties directed toward dialogue. In this approach, relationships have a "dialogue-opening" direction which means increasing the channels of communication between the listener and the speaker and deepening mutual understanding and democratic outlook and behavior.

   "The communication age" as said earlier can become "the dialogue age" and the "Network society" can organize network order, on the condition that it can hear the silent voices of the world in cultural and urban domains. Life in the mediated world is not the need of our age. We can on one side see the virtual dominance of reality but on the other side there is possibility for speaking and listening in order to see the truth and turn to objectivity. Religions, also, can turn to the second side and the media, as well, can adopt fast, cheap, and abundant distribution of information and knowledge in this direction.

   So, there is a new vision for illustrating the role of the media and religion in promotion of inclusivism. And as Sohrab—Iranian poet—put it, we just need to wash our eyes and look in a different way.

Questions and Answers

Question: My question is related to the alienation model. It was suggested that alienation has been a major underlying cause of the extremist movements in general. Now I wonder also what is the perception of the extremists about this alienation. They might feel that actually they are much more representative of the wider community. In other words, their perception of support might be much wider than the intellectuals might think.

Answer: Otherness and the importance of otherness is the base of fundamentalism. So for sure alienation is a sort of game in the hand of

fundamentalists. We can play the same game, with the same element, and protect and support tolerance and peace. I believe that the majority among Muslims, Jews, and Christians are with tolerance, are with accepting others, but they just do not have a voice.

[*Question:* What role can the media play in this?]

Answer: I spoke on media and religion. Media plays a very important role in bringing the dialogue into communities and society. I still believe the majority in all communities is not with fundamentalists if they understand what fundamentalists have planned for them, or for humanity, for us. So intellectuals and media must work hand in hand to dialogue with people, and not with fundamentalists. Of course, the minority supporters of fundamentalists in the society—because they are in the society—will listen and will be wiped out.

Question: How have such groups fared in practical experience in Iran through the last, maybe, two decades. Can you give a little bit more practical experience about how the media may expose these people and promote dialogue.

Answer: I believe Iran is one of the best examples to show how people, ordinary people, the majority of people, are not so much with—using a Persian expression—the color of the voice. Or, the voice of the fundamentalists is not so loud in people's ears. Fundamentalists mostly use the opportunities in which a nonreligious event or something has been popularized and people have questions about it and want to have an answer to it. So when such a nonreligious event is opposed to society, fundamentalists use these political events and situations and questions as religious issues. I believe in the Middle East, we do not have a problem of religion, but most problems have been somehow called religious. The main problem of the Middle East is not a religious problem. It is a political problem, but powers in both parts, West or East, use these problems and intertwine them with religion. I believe there might be two answers to your question, or two suggestions. One is to have a better dialogue with people and second, to ask for religious leaders to talk to people and show them how these problems are not religious and are separated from religion.

Question: My question relates to the younger generation. I understand that a majority of the population of Iran is below the age of certainly twenty-five, or maybe younger. Is there a generation gap between older people who have lived through the Shah's Iran and then the Iranian Revolution, whose Islamic identity may be very much a resistance identity, and the younger generation that now has access, to a large degree, to Internet technologies, weblogs, etc. Are they continuing a resistance identity or more of an open identity the way you have described in your paper?

Answer: I believe now that regarding the Internet situation and the situation of the media, communication in the world now, every six or seven years we have a new generation. We witness what I said about six or seven years as the difference between two generations in Iran, because 60 percent of the population

is young and twelve million have access to the Internet. I agree with you that Iranians, compared to other nations in the Middle East, have less problems with fundamentalism or are less sensitive to fundamentalism and its approaches. So that's why I believe that we have to make a distinction between the voice of people, with what has been called the voice of fundamentalism, being heard from countries in the Middle East. Iran is one of them.

Question: Could you speak a little more as a blogger yourself about the role of weblogs and the new generation? I see there's a lot of conflict. The Internet is almost a battleground of the different factions—fundamentalist and more conservative factions and the newer, more moderate groups in Islam, especially in North America. Could you speak a little bit more about that?

Answer: Weblogs is a medium. It shows that the borders of the world have been somehow changed. In our borders, we have border keepers. We can only physically control the coming and going of people. But it's like from above, we are facing just one world. There is no boundaries. That's why the voice of violence can be so loud and also why other voices can be heard too. So, as a moderate group, we believe that we have to be able to present a more moderate version of religion, so people can reconcile between their daily life and the religious aspects of their lives. So both fundamentalists and others, more moderates, can use media as a tool to say what they want to say. Our role is to use it as much as we can, to have our own voice and to find it.

Question: We often have the situation when this form of religion called fundamentalism is installed because of weakness of government that does not fulfill its fundamental role as promoter of order in the country. I think, as an example, of the northern states of Nigeria. What is your perspective on this?

Answer: I cannot ignore the importance of ethical or historical aspects or issues. There are so many places in the world that will not stop violence just with our advice or with dialogue. But we have no other way than inviting the world community to dialogue. So we can see that the role, the effects of dialogue in some parts of the world that fifty years ago, we couldn't even believe that there would be any place for dialogue in those areas is now so important, so effective.

What we can do is that those who have a voice and who can share what they believe, their belief in peace, they say they present it to the world. They try to get others to hear it, to listen to it. Of course, a big part of what I'm saying is in the hands of politicians. I repeat what I said earlier in my talk that so many religious conflicts in the world are just called religious. In fact, they are more political issues and they have their roots in politics.

17

Religion and Media

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

As a publisher of *Hinduism Today* Magazine, I've been asked to speak on the topic of religion and the media. The media obviously has played the central role in disseminating information on September 11th, subsequent terrorist attacks, and the military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East, all of which have a religious component. By media, we specifically mean journalistic reporting, be it newspapers, magazines, television, and the Internet, and not including fictional presentations, such as art, movies, music, and the stage, though these too have significant impact on how religion is viewed. The question arises naturally as to the media's ability to deal with this religious component, given its limitations of expertise, time, and known institutional peculiarities. We're going to talk about these limitations over the next hour, as well as the opportunities which religious people and groups have to educate and favorably impact the media, locally and globally. The organizer of the congress, Prof. Arvind Sharma, mentioned in his letter inviting us to give this presentation that he hoped we would be able to show how the media might use its persuasive power to promote harmony among religions and bridge the secular-religious divide. In our opinion, this is a challenging possibility. But the media will not be able to accomplish this by itself, for the media to promote harmony among religions requires religious groups to work with the media in specific ways, which we shall detail in this presentation. The same effort to promote harmony among religions should also enable the nonreligious, secular members of society to gain greater understanding, and perhaps even appreciation, of the religions within society.

Our experience with the media comes from *Hinduism Today* Magazine, which was founded in 1979, and has since evolved into a full-color magazine

published quarterly, supplemented by our daily Hindu Press International e-mail news summary service. We publish *Hinduism Today* as a nonprofit service to our faith to record the modern history of a billion-strong religion in renaissance. We have no political agenda and report on all the various sects and lineages of our religion. Mostly, we promote everyone's good works, though, when necessary, we investigate controversies, especially those covered poorly in the mainstream media. Our goals are to foster Hindu solidarity, inform and inspire Hindus, and dispel misinformation about Hinduism. The following slides show our covers and articles from several of our issues over the last few years. This talk is first setting some basic definitions, then discussing the realities of journalism, in order to offer some strategies for better relationships between religionists and the media.

The media is a business. It's an obvious but crucial point that media such as newspapers, magazines, and television are a business. With the exception of public broadcasting and government-controlled outlets, they're expected to turn a profit. This business sells as news both information and entertainment. Media have criteria for determining what is news. Everyday, journalists around the world ponder whether some event or issue is news according to established criteria. So then, what is this news the media wants to provide us? Here's one typical set of criteria, illustrated with photos from the major wire services. First, effect: How many people were, are, or will be affected, and by how much? For example, the 2004 tsunami pictured here, the war in Iraq or Lebanon have affected tens of millions of people. In terms of religion, a split in the Anglican Church or a change in Catholic doctrine would affect a large number of people, and hence is news. In general, war, crime, violence of any sort, accidents, and natural disasters are all news because they have such a dramatic impact on those affected. Second, timeliness. Did the event occur very recently? As information becomes older, it becomes less newsworthy. A major accident snarling traffic downtown is news the day it happens, but not the next morning. Annual reporting of religious holidays is also an example. They are news when they happen, but not at other times of the year. This Zuma press photo [I am showing now] is of the festival commemorating the culmination of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, as celebrated in West Palm Beach, Florida. Third, revelation. Is there significant new information previously unknown, for example, a new cure for a disease, an archeological discovery, uncovered criminal activity or, for a religious example, the discovery of the Gospel of Judas, pictured here in its original bundle, before conservation work began. Fourth, proximity. Was the event nearby geographically? Perhaps the most common example being the local weather, which is always news. For example, your July heat wave, for which the wires posted this photo from Zuma press on electrical demand. Fifth, oddity. Was the event highly unusual? In the journalism books, they say dog bites man is not news, but man bites dog is. Two months ago, in Ottawa, a fleeing suspect did actually bite a police dog, named Pago, generating news stories as far away as South Africa and Malaysia. Unfortunately, religion often ends up in this category. Be it Shi'ite Muslims flaying themselves to mark the martyrdom of

Imam Hussein or Christian ministers handling poisonous snakes, both acts of testament to their faith. And you'll likely find in articles using these photos that nothing is made of the Shi'ite man's ability to withstand pain or the fact that the minister does not get bit by the snake. Sixth, entertainment. Does it make for a fun or engaging story? Good stories about children and animals fall in this category, as does the entire realm of sports. A number of religious activities can come in this category, such as a traditional wedding, a festival or a coming-of-age event that are colorful and interesting to people of other faiths. For example, this wire photo of a 2005 Sikh wedding here in Toronto qualifies on three counts. The groom is part of a colorful wedding, but also the child and the horse add diverting or amusing elements. Seventh, celebrity. Was anyone famous involved? Entire publications operate within this single category. They deem it news to take a photo of a movie star walking down the street. So if a celebrity does something religious, it becomes news. For example, pop singer Britney Spears visiting a Hindu temple in Los Angeles to have her baby blessed. She generated many stories, most of them unexplainably critical of her. The celebrity effect is also cumulative, so if you have the Dalai Lama paired with celebrity actor Richard Gere, it becomes even more important news. These categories are often applied collectively. For example, this photo combined a culturally significant Toronto Film Festival with the appealing children and a celebrity. That would be the movie-star dog, Lassie.

You'll note that this method of categorizing news doesn't necessarily identify truly important issues or events. And they may actually marginalize them. In practice, the media tends to focus on open conflict, and not necessarily on truly critical issues. Professor Beverly Keever of the School of Communications at the University of Hawaii told us there is an inverse relationship to what is considered news and what is important. She gives the example of the breakdown of the foster care system in Hawaii, which will ultimately have a disastrous societal impact, that never appears in the news. Global warming tends to get some press these days, much more than it did twenty years ago, but still not much, considering the consequences. It got more when Al Gore, a celebrity, made a documentary on it, adding to its news value. Important religious issues may not qualify as news. How often does one see a story on the declining religiosity among youth or the decline in the number of youth entering the clergy, both issues in all religions? What, in the long run, is the human consequence of an unreligious generation compared to, say, the results of a province's next elections, which could be but a minor blip in political history?

Are conferences news? People who want to change the world such as our organizer, Prof. Arvind Sharma, arrange conferences to bring together the best and the brightest to tackle important issues. The media will likely ignore these conference proceedings. Why? Because a conference by itself doesn't fit into the news criteria. To be news, something has to be present other than the fact of a conference. You've just seen here in Toronto the fairly good coverage of the AIDS conference, but what did it focus on? Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, and Richard Gere, the celebrities. The AIDS conference cochair, Dr. Helene Gale,

fairly acknowledged, "It's been wonderful to have people come to the conference, who, by definition of their visibility, create more visibility for the conference." The boycotting of the conference by Uganda AIDS activist Marvin Simpa created additional news, as did the debate at the conference over the dominance of the celebrities. Street protests also bring out the media, and had Dr. Sharma assigned several dozen graduate students to picket this venue on any pretense, media coverage would have increased.

We have asked several prominent Hindus to contribute comments for this presentation, which we will share as we proceed through the talk. The first is from Dr. Karan Singh. He is a son of the last Maharaja of Kashmir and a prominent Indian politician and scholar of religion. He has been elected to India's Parliament, held Cabinet post, and served as India's ambassador to the United States. He has represented Hinduism at several international conferences and is a major figure in the interfaith movement. He specifically addressed the issue of how the media selects its news. He said, "It is the big responsibility of the media to report factually and accurately on what has happened. At the same time, the media should throw its weight in favor of communal harmony. Presently, the media hardly takes note of the interfaith movement. For example, there was a huge gathering for the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa in 1999. There was not a word in the press about it. Twenty years ago, the environmental movement was similarly ignored or on the periphery of media coverage. Now, it has moved to the center. The same needs to happen with the interfaith movement." He also remarked: "prior to the England August arrests for the plane plot using liquid explosives, a million Muslims have lived peacefully in England for thirty or forty years. Now the whole community is under suspicion. This is a tragedy, but brought on by the way these jihadists have acted, which has demonized Islam. The press should report on the softer aspects of Islam. The teachings of Sufism, for example, should be brought to the fore, whereas now, Wahhabi Islam has more exposure. In general, religions need to project more universal principles. Hinduism has a strong tradition of pluralism."

Now, we will talk about the world of the journalist. Experienced reporters are excellent writers well trained in information gathering. They are a quick study of complex issues and expert at sniffing out deception and trickery. Reporters are almost always working under time deadlines. They are not researchers with weeks or months to investigate their topic. A report on an event today often needs to be filed tonight for publishing in the morning or even for today's evening news. So reporters can only include in their report the information they can gather in the short time they have to gather it. The job of the reporter often reveals to him the underbelly of life—crime, drugs, fraud in conflict. After a number of years of seeing the worst mankind has to offer, reporters can become jaded, even cynical. They've run into too many people willing to say anything to get into the news, been lied to by too many politicians or crafty businessmen with a hidden agenda, and seen too often in firsthand man's inhumanity to man. It's not a profession that attracts religious

people. We encountered one reporter, a prominent member of the profession in the United States, who said, "We don't talk about religion in the newsroom. We consider religion just another special interest group." Another reporter confided, "We'll report on your activity, but we don't care about your core beliefs." To be sure, other reporters we consulted did not endorse these cynical attitudes, yet acknowledged they were not uncommon. It is unlikely this institutional attitude will change any time soon.

Just because reporters are in a hurry doesn't mean they're not prepared to observe minute details in their reports. Associated Press is the largest news gathering organization in the world. It publishes a style book which is a mini-encyclopedia, containing entries ranging from the correct spelling of certain words to the proper use of acronyms to short descriptions of major religious denominations. There is one on every English-speaking reporter's desk in the world. We suggest you buy one and study it. Understand the minutiae a reporter can manage. For example, what is this? Right on page 38 of the AP style manual: Canada goose, not Canadian goose. Similarly, any reporter can tell you that Jeep should be capitalized, as should Jacuzzi and Rollerblades, because they're all trademarks, as the style book explains. Reporters are instructed to use letter carriers instead of mailman, because women hold the job, and that there is no apostrophe in Pikes Peak. The style book contains a number of entries on religion. The style book is fairly comprehensive for Christian sects, with multiple entries covering several pages. Here's the entry on Islam, all of Islam, which amounts to just a single page. Hinduism at left and Buddhism at right each get only one column. Neither Sikhs nor Jains are even mentioned. The information on Hinduism is simplistic and contains the astoundingly inaccurate statement that, in Hinduism, there is no formal clergy, when there are thousands of formal priestly and monastic lineages. It also says there are one million Hindus in the United States, when there are 2.2 million. Reporters obviously are resourceful enough to find other sources of information than the style book. However, the style book is considered authoritative. The lesson to be learned from the style book is that reporters are quite capable of dealing with minute details of a subject. We're not asking too much that they learn and understand the history, the theology, and the current manifestation of any religion or religious movement which enters their sphere of reporting.

To summarize our first section, the media is a business, with all that means in terms of selling a product. News is what the media say it is, and not necessarily what is important. What we, as religious people, consider significant about our faith or what's vitally important to the future of mankind may be dismissed as not newsworthy. The criteria for news are effect, timeliness, revelation, proximity, oddity, entertainment, and celebrity. There are cynical people in the media business who do not regard religion kindly. The media is quite capable of dealing with complex issues and subtle distinctions. It is up to religious groups to educate them as to how to do so with regard to a particular religion.

Moving on to our second part. There are two general circumstances under which religion comes into the media: proactive interaction and reactive

interaction. Proactive interaction is when religious groups or persons seek out the press with the intent of creating a news item. Proactive interaction is the topic of this section, section two of our talk. The second manner in which religion comes into the press is through reactive interaction, when something has happened, like terrorist attacks by members of our faiths, for example, and suddenly the press comes looking for us. Or we approach them because something published provoked and outraged us. This will be the subject of our third section.

It's our thesis that religious groups should take the time and make the effort to create proactive interactions with the media, as a means of educating the community about their faith. In this section of our talk, we're going to explore the various means of getting religion in the media in benign circumstances, that is, when not faced with some crisis. Environmentalists have a saying that to save the planet, we must think globally and act locally. We recommend applying the same concept to media relations. It means that we evaluate the global situation about religion and determine those things which we can do at a local level to bring about some improvement. The first step in proactive interaction is getting to know your local media. The goal with the local press is not to hit the front page or the prime-time TV report. It is rather to establish a constant low key presence through news items, photo opportunities, educational features, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. In North America, most newspapers and magazines have an editor responsible for religious reporting. TV stations may have a reporter assigned part-time to religion. Religious leaders should meet the local religion editors and get to know them personally. The leaders should make themselves easily available. Religious leaders can facilitate the flow of news about their community to the media. Religion editors want to reflect their community's religious diversity in the publication. The religion editor at the *Honolulu Advertiser* newspaper told us that most of the material she receives is from Christian evangelicals. She, like other religion editors, has to seek out other religious groups and develop stories. And media conglomerate Gannett Corporation, of which the *Advertiser* is a part, actually grades its publications on the number of ethnic religious voices which appear. One fruitful area of news, she explains, is the intersecting circles between religious communities, that is, areas of concern, activity, or ceremony, which are pretty much the same across religions. For example, one religious community's concern for passing on their religious heritage to the next generation makes a good story to a religion editor, as all other communities will be interested in it. Celebrations common to all religions, such as marriage or coming of age, likewise make interesting stories and serve to educate the entire community in particular traditions. Color ceremonies, such as the Sikh wedding we saw earlier, can serve, for example, as a means to explain the Sikh view of marriage and family.

Next, for both local and wider coverage, religious groups need to have a clear Internet presence, a Web site which explains the basics of the faith in simple terms. Religious groups should also have a section on their Web site for the media. One critical aspect to this section is well-written press releases

on recent events complete with high resolution photos and contact information for any reporter wanting more specifics. A group with the resources can hire a public relations firm to manage a Web site, issue press releases, and respond to the media. Here, for example, is a nicely organized main page of the immense Vatican Web site. By clicking on the information button, one quickly goes to a page which includes press contacts. This, on the other hand, is the first web page listed for a Google search on Islam. While it is a vast Web site, it is not clearly organized and provides no links for the media to use.

There are many opportunities in a community to generate favorable news coverage. One that works well for us is our open house, which we hold once every two years, inviting friends on that island, local clergy, politicians, and the media. There is a tour, entertainment, and small talk, all of which allow those of other religions to understand what we are doing. Weddings are also of general interest, especially for one that is colorful. The local press will be delighted to cover it, either as part of the religion page or the society page. A church, mosque, or temple can work out coverage of a festival or holy days with the local press. Most communities have interfaith organizations. Participation is not likely to generate media coverage, but is a valuable opportunity to educate other ministers on one's faith. All ministers of religion in one area should be considered as one's natural allies regardless of sect, and an effort made to personally know each. Not to be overlooked is the simple but expensive method of buying paid advertising space in newspapers, magazines, television, or, in this case, on a billboard calling for the ordination of women as priests in the Catholic Church. Ads can be used noncontroversially to explain a particular religious holiday or be a carefully crafted statement in response to a tragic event.

One can gain favorable media coverage and community appreciation through social service activities, such as feeding the poor, holding medical camps, and disaster relief. The Sikh religion has a tradition of free feeding, the langar, which they put into action during disasters in the United States. The langar, or community kitchen, was established by Sikh Gurus 500 years ago to provide food to everyone. Those in India are familiar with the tradition and expect the appearance of langar during relief work, such as this one after the tsunami struck South India. But this is something new in the West, a colorful and charitable tradition which made for news in the context of the Katrina relief efforts. Here, Christian charity presents a cheque for $20,000 to the Red Cross for Katrina relief. One U.S. Hindu temple had no such programs and told me they were regarded as a cult by the local community. Other Hindu temples, on the other hand, are major supporters of the food bank and local charities, and are well regarded by their community. A religious group helping with a disaster that is not nearby should definitely contact their local press to inform them of their efforts.

Swami Pragyanand, the spokesperson for one of India's largest monastic orders, the Avahan Akhara—he was interviewed by *Hinduism Today* for this event and spoke to the role of media in India. He said: "At the moment in India, the media role is not satisfactory. They publish exclusively negative

news, giving full coverage to every explosion, and nothing positive. If they give news of crime, why not also religion? The reader need positive news, too, and the media should be helpful to religion and can play a prominent role in the character-building of our youth. In India now, they will report negative information on religion but not the positive work that is being done."

Religious groups need to be prepared to take advantage of opportunities, for example, by having well-trained speakers available on short notice. Speaking opportunities range from public forums organized by politicians to TV programs to elementary school presentations. A recent program on the public broadcasting system assembled a group of moderate Muslims, including one woman, to discuss issues about Islam. Speakers should be people educated in the faith who speak from their heart. Community interfaith groups can organize speakers of the religions of the community. For example, the Milwaukee Wisconsin Interfaith Group has a speaker's bureau. The Catholic Church there took the lead to manage this Web site for the speakers who represent the Buddhist, Christian, Christian Science, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim communities. In Honolulu, following September 11th, the Muslim community formed a speaker's bureau that was available for just about any occasion or venue, from TV interviews to elementary school presentations. The Southern Poverty Law Center in the United States has a program called Teaching Tolerance. One part of it is to have children meet children of other religions. Instituting such programs is an effective way of becoming known in your community. Some religions have succeeded in creating national and international groups which monitor and respond to the press, such as B'nai Brith, Council on American Islamic Relations, and the Hindu American Foundation. Those groups respond both to events that have involved their faith as well as the way their religion is treated in the media itself. Advocacy groups necessarily work to influence the political process, which is why we ourselves don't engage in this kind of activity.

A religious group can also be its own press, as we have done with *Hinduism Today* and our daily e-mail news summary service, Hindu Press International. But being your own press is different from being a watchdog or advocacy group, as just discussed. To be effective, it needs to be done in a thoroughly professional manner, on a par with *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine. Its reporting needs to be accurate and unbiased, something that can be trusted by the media. While not begun by a religious group, a useful illustration is Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based news channel and Web site. Prior to September 11th, hardly anyone in the West had heard of it, and when they did, they thought it perhaps a radical Muslim operation. But its factual reporting quickly dispelled that impression, at least among those who explored the organization. Al Jazeera has a skilled team of reporters on the scene of major events, and from this basis generates accurate news. In doing so, it follows standard journalism practices. What Al Jazeera has accomplished is to bring an Arab viewpoint to events which would otherwise be seen only through the eyes of Western journalists.

In summary then, the elements of proactive interaction with the media are as follows: be a part of your local community by bringing your lives into theirs—

the reports on holidays, religious rights, etc.—and by making your religion's voice heard on important issues; personally get to know the local journalists and television reporters; make it easy for them to collect a story on your community; understand how the media thinks and what it considers news; run regular programs of social service, such as medical camps or food distribution; be prepared to respond to local and national disasters, either by direct efforts or by donating money; create or join a speaker's bureau; form a local or national activist organization; become your own media with a newspaper, magazine, television or radio station; develop a comprehensive, media-friendly Web site; invite the media to an open house, regular services, special events and holidays; let them meet the congregation; participate in local interfaith activities; and—if all else fails—buy an ad.

Dr. A Vaithilingam is the president of the Malaysia Hindu Sangam. We interviewed him for this presentation here as a representative of a country where the media is watched quite closely. His perspective is one of someone living in a potentially volatile country, where sections of the media have in the past instigated disruptive activities. We are not in any way endorsing suppression of a free press as is done in Malaysia, but include his testimony to show the underlying motivation and mechanics of such suppression. He said, "Let me first give some background about Malaysia and freedom of the press. There are three groups in Malaysia: the Malays, who are the majority; the Chinese, who control the economy; and the Indians, who are about seven percent. In 1959, there were racial riots, especially in Kuala Lumpur. Following these racial riots, restrictions were imposed on the press in the 1960s and 70s. Then things got a little bit more liberal until, in the 80s, the issue of religion conversion of Muslims by certain Christian groups happened. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister in 1981 and he imposed a lot of restrictions on the press. Personally, I feel that because of the seriousness of either race or religion, sometimes there is a need for a bit of restrictions. Recently we faced the claim that Moorthy, a Hindu, an ex-army man who was part of Malaysia's Everest climbing team, had converted to Islam shortly before he died. He was already unconscious when the conversion claim was announced. And after he died, he was given a Muslim burial. Attempts by his Hindu wife to claim his body for cremation was rejected by the courts on the basis that they could not overrule the Muslim Shari'ah court, which had already decided that Moorthy had converted. This became a very emotional issue for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Now, there is the case of Lena Joy, a Malay Muslim girl who converted to Christianity and now demands that this conversion be officially recognized on her ID card. Shari'ah court will not recognize the conversion and the High Court has declined to intervene. Now the case has gone to the Supreme Court and it is yet to be decided. We, the non-Muslims, have campaigned that Article 11 of the Constitution assuring the freedom of choice and worship be upheld. Muslims want Article 12-11A to prevail. This article was added in Mahathir's time and states that all matters pertaining to Islam should be decided by the Shari'ah court. The issue is highly sensitive and soon will be decided by the Supreme Court."

Moving on to our Part Three. In this third part of our presentation, we're going to talk about reactive interaction with the press. That is, how should religious people and groups deal with a breaking news event that reflects upon them as a religion? The day a religion or religious group is badly portrayed in the press is not the best day to start developing a working relationship with the media. An existing, well-developed relationship is a better starting point. Events that attract global attention require a response on both the global and local levels. Unfortunately, only the Catholic Church is really organized so as to respond in a unified manner. The lack of centralized authority in most religions can make it difficult for the majority feelings to be heard.

An immediate response is important. As an example of responding to a major event, we'll take the July 28th shooting at a Seattle synagogue which left one dead and five wounded. The attack occurred in the afternoon of July 28th and is reported in the *Seattle Times.* The Council on American Islamic Relations issued a press release shortly after midnight of the following day, just hours after the shooting occurred. It includes names and contact information for seven Islamic organizations in the Seattle area. Excerpts from the Council on American Islamic Relations' statement are included at the end of the *Seattle Times'* report which appeared the day after the shooting. On the following day, the 30th, a conciliatory article appears in the *Seattle Times* containing statements from Jews and Muslims, including community organizations mentioned in the Council on American Islamic Relations' press release and Aziz Junejo, a columnist for the *Seattle Times'* Faith and Values page, that is, their religion page. This is an example of a good response to a crisis, which involved both the issuing of a timely statement by the Council on American Islamic Relations and the use of a long-standing relationship with the *Seattle Times'* religion page columnist Aziz Junejo.

Anuttama Dasa is the North American director of communications for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. As such, he is responsible for dealing with the national press and for educating local chapters on public relations. He's had many years of experience. Asked by us for his suggestions to religions for dealing with the media, he responded: "The media is the gatekeeper to the minds and hearts of most of the world's population. As people of faith, we need to understand that media and work with media people to promote the important truths we have to offer the world. The media is composed of people like you and I that have feelings, limitations, and a job to do under tremendous pressure. They're paid to get out the story, whether it is positive or not. Sadly, sensational news sells. Don't take it personally. Instead, be proactive. For example, promote significant, positive events to the media. Know your facts and present them in an easily understandable way. Be ready to provide photo opportunities and interviews with a variety of interesting people in your community, not just the institutional head. Do not be defensive if the media takes a negative perspective. Help them see a balanced and fair perspective. If you don't know the answer to something, say so, and get back with the correct information as soon as possible. Don't be evasive. Do not assume the

media hates you. They don't. They're only trying to fill their paper, magazine, or TV news with something of interest."

Next, we'll look at an October 4th, 2003 report in the *Toronto Star* which upset the Hindu community in Canada. It's an example of media coverage which is biased, unfair, or demeaning to a community and how to deal with it. The *Star* published a photo of a Durga statue being prepared for the annual Durga festival in India, a multiday celebration involving hundreds of millions of Hindus. In the photo, the statue was nearly finished but is yet undressed. The naked lady was a provocative depiction of a sacred festival. Hindus found the publishing of this one photo to represent one of Hinduism's largest festivals to be insulting, presenting Hinduism in a bizarre manner. We would say this incident was an exception to the *Toronto Star*'s exemplary record of inclusiveness and respect in its reporting on minority religions.

Hindus were offended by the photo and informed the *Star*, leading to this sequence of events, which is, to our experience, typical of such protests against the media. Initial complaints were ignored, including 1,000 e-mail letters to the editor. Demonstrations in front of their office, coupled with contact from concerned Hindu community leaders got their attention. Community leaders met with the editors and explained the photo by itself simply showed part of a normal process of festival preparation. But the selection of this particular photo as the only picture to publish in *Toronto* about the festival was obviously done to highlight the bizarre and to present something that the non-Hindus would laugh or snicker at. The paper's response was to issue a half-hearted apology on October 11th, which ended with a statement that, "when asked, several Hindus said the photo didn't offend them." It didn't identify these several Hindus as qualified people, such as community leaders, temple priests, scholars of Hindu iconography, or even devout Hindus, but still used their opinion to justify their photo. Hindus rejected the apology and continued to protest. Editors ultimately concluded Hindus were genuinely offended by the photo and issued a proper apology. In the course of doing so, they also acknowledged to community leaders the *Star* already had a policy in place to present religious image in a dignified manner. They admitted they had failed to abide by their own policy. Here's the photo the *Star* published. Available at the same time to them from Reuters and other wire services were the following photos which they could have chosen from. Clearly, the *Toronto Star* had many fine photos to choose from, but chose the most bizarre, vulgar, and salacious. In summary, the elements of this successful protest to a publication are—clearly stated their objectives; gathered community support, including from politicians, academics, and other religions; did not settle for anything less than a full change of heart; insisted the *Star* enforced its existing policies with regard to how it treats religion.

Madhu Kishwar of Delhi, India is the editor of *Manushi* magazine. She is one of India's leading activists for women's rights and social justice for disadvantaged communities. She was interviewed for this presentation by Rajiv Malik, our Delhi correspondent. She focused on the larger problems of bias

in the academic arena which trains reporters, one result of which is bias in the media. Among her comments, she said: "India is the one country in the world where the majority community, the Hindus, complain that they are not given a sympathetic coverage by the press as against the minority communities of Islam and Christianity, which get a better treatment by the press. Our mainstream national press is greatly influenced by the Leftists, who in turn are influenced by the colonial critique of Hinduism. As well, they are influenced by Karl Marx, who portrayed Hinduism as a stagnant civilization, which is a cesspool of dehumanizing practices. So that is the Marxist description and that of British missionaries through which most of the scholars and media see Hinduism in India. Our educated elite is poorly informed about our own religion and culture. Experts on Hinduism are in short supply. The best that exists have inadequate knowledge and are biased as well. The whole information structure is of a shoddy quality. Now if certain people of a religion do demonic things in the name of Islam, what can others do? It is the actions of a community that determines a popular perception and image about it. I must say, that so far as Indian mainstream media is concerned, they have acted very responsibly and have not done anything to demonize Islam. The role of Indian mainstream media, which I keep track of, has been very fair and balanced. I can only speak about the relationship with my religion, that is, Hinduism, with the media. If I can understand my own religion and represent it in the best way possible, that is enough. Some kind of a concrete initiative has to come from India-based groups of scholars and institutions to create world-class institutions and scholars here in India."

There are various ways to protest to the media. Call a newspaper or magazine and complain about an article, and they'll tell you to write a letter to the editor. It's simple and quick for them. Letters to the editor are useful in responding to other letters to the editor, some editorial pieces, and factual errors in reports. But they don't do anything to change bad attitudes or newspaper policy. There's a great tendency on the part of religious groups to call for a public campaign by their members, deluging the local press and politicians with all sorts of mail. This approach will backfire if people get hostile. Most campaigns we've seen launched online by Hindus degenerate into ugly name-calling, even threats, and do more harm than good. Such public campaigns will only be effective when organized and moderated by a well-known group. A thoughtful and polite approach is much more productive than condemning, accusatory diatribes. For example, the Muslim community in Phoenix, Arizona, arranged a face-to-face meeting with the editors of the local newspaper. They said, "We don't see our community in your newspaper." This polite objection resulted in a permanent shift and one reporter was assigned part-time to cover news and events in the Muslim community, which numbers over 70,000.

The recent case of the cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad is instructive as a public campaign that got out of hand. What was notable to us was the hypocrisy of the Western press defending the cartoons as an expression of free speech. Muslims rightly pointed out that in several countries in Europe it is

actually against the law to publish anti-Semitic cartoons. It is as well against the policy of every major Western publication to publish anti-Semitic or racist cartoons. Now the Western media understands it must extend this policy to Muslims. Whether this was best accomplished by deadly riots and death threats against the cartoonists is another question. Making enemies of the press is never a good strategy. Community leaders in Denmark could have tried to solve the issue locally before others became involved who saw an opportunity to create civil unrest. A group from any religion could have taken the lead had the papers and cartoonists been convinced to apologize early, and it would have been much more difficult for the matter to become an international disaster complete with loss of life.

Let's summarize the elements of reactive response to negative or incorrect media coverage. Be prepared in advance, both in terms of establishing working relationships with both local and national media and in terms of forming advocacy groups to respond. Have press releases prepared for various eventualities. Timing is important. Be able to respond immediately with an authoritative voice. Reach out to the local community in each area that is impacted by the event, including through interfaith connections. And media is not the enemy, just because they're accurately reporting on something that reflects badly on your religion and neglecting all the good you do. Don't be overly defensive. Protest improper reporting politely and firmly. Don't make threats. Persist until a proper resolution is reached. We do not have to accept brush-offs or half-hearted apologies when the religious community is involved. Many in the media are cynical and inherently skeptical about religion. This is not likely to change. Bias in the media can also have deep roots in the nation's academic structure and tradition, as is the case in India. The religious leaders in your community and secular leaders should meet the editors of your local press. Quick action in response to negative reports may prevent further trouble from radical elements.

So, we're going to summarize now. Dr. Sharma originally asked how the media might use its persuasive power to promote harmony among religions and bridge the religious and secular divide. In our opinion, the responsibility to make this happen belongs with religious groups. Each group needs to work to improve its relationship with the media. They should understand how the media thinks and works. It has its institutional peculiarities, some of which work against religion. They need to be proactive and open more channels to those who report the news, understand their world in both its opportunities and restrictions, and make it easy for the media to accurately and sympathetically report on religious events. They need to be organized to quickly respond reactively when crisis situations occur. One way to bridge the secular-religious divide is to share our lives with each other, which can be done in part by stories in the media. People can then learn that we all have many experiences, concerns, and challenges in common. We all seek to live life for a higher purpose, even if we don't conceive of that purpose in terms of God. Through programs such as Teaching Tolerance, our children can meet children of different races

and religions and learn from an early age of their commonalities. In this way, we can develop an honest respect for each other, and for the religious or nonreligious path we each follow in life. Thank you very much.

Questions and Answers

Question: I wonder if you could throw some light on the comprehensive role of the media. Differentiate the media, print media versus the image media, and that kind of thing, and how one might relate to them in a nuanced fashion.

Answer: Image media means, like, television?

Question: Television on the one hand, print on the other.

Answer: It's easier to appeal to the print media. For example, when I travel to various places, quite often, someone from the local newspaper would interview me. But very seldom do I get a television interview. So it shows that television is looking for something that is graphically appealing, that will do well on the screen. So it needs to be better choreographed, better thought out. It has to be in the sense of an attractive event. We talked about events such as a wedding, for example, or some ceremony of a child. It could be done in an interesting way, kind of a mini-documentary for the media. In general, it has to be more interesting, more thought out, more choreographed in order to get into the visual media.

Question: Could you very briefly focus on the success that *Hinduism Today* has achieved in the last twenty or thirty years that it has been in existence.

Answer: What makes it different is that it talks about all of Hinduism. In Hinduism, we have so many different denominations, so many different teachers. And quite often, the publications within Hinduism just talk about one denomination or one teacher. How ours is different is we talk about them all, and that's a specific goal of our publication. And, in fact, we limit the amount we can talk about ourselves to a very small amount. And because of that, we're well respected by Hindu leaders around the world and Hindu educators, and it serves a unique function in that it is more educational. It is able to present the overview of the Hindu religion more than any other publications because of what I've just described.

Question: Do you have anything to say about investigative journalism pieces or reportage over a longer time frame, and how religions can address that?

Answer: Could you ask your question again? I didn't quite grasp it.

Question: Sure. A lot of what you spoke about related to how reporters face time pressure in beat reporting. But there's also a lot of investigative journalism pieces that take a much longer period of time but still obviously have bias involved. I was wondering if you can speak to how religion should deal with that.

Answer: Well, I think one of the key points we talked about is knowing the editors at the local newspapers. And if you know they are doing a story, then, hopefully, they would allow you to contribute in some way. Of course, they won't let you edit it—they have the last word—but they may let you look at it, or at least solicit your input on important points. So I would say, try and participate in that way. Try and get your input accepted as part of the story. And, of course, that is based on knowing them in the first place, which is one of the important keys we've brought out.

Question: Is it foreseeable that a magazine like *Hinduism Today* could influence media studies in terms of students coming out as reporters and journalists with a religious perspective or some sort of religious training background? There seems to be a huge divide between coverage of political issues or world affairs and religious studies or religion issues.

Answer: Yes. To influence journalist students, *Hinduism Today* and other religious magazines would need to be studied as part of the curriculum, i.e. make sure journalist curriculum devoted some time to this area.

Question: What about new forms, for example, through the Internet, to communicate with their members?

Answer: Well, yes. That's a very good point. What has our experience been? Well, we rely heavily on the Internet for our communications. We have a number of Web sites. One of them has daily news, for example. It changes everyday. Part of it follows me around the world. I just went to Malaysia and Singapore and now I'm here. So you can see photographs—photographs of all the people we met—and summaries of the talk right on it, so that our members and supporters can see what we're doing on a daily basis. What we find particularly effective is a Web site that changes everyday. There's nothing worse on the web than a site that changes once a year. So we use that, plus we send out various e-mail publications to different categories of members and supporters. That's why we have our Hindu Press International, which we send out to thousands of people everyday, just general Hindu news. Because our magazine is only quarterly, we send this out everyday so people can know about current events in a timely way. Plus we have other newsletters we send out on e-mail to select groups. So we think it's very important for religion to also be a part of the Internet and utilize both web and e-mail in terms of influencing its members of supporters.

Question: As a person who spent some years working as a reporter at a local newspaper here in Montreal I would like to congratulate you on your presentation. You seem to know what you're talking about and I would endorse much of what you said. I think there's lots of good stuff that religious people could well pay attention to. Would you not agree that there can be sometimes a problem with hypersensitivity and worse? From some of my reading—and I have followed the matter—in the case of the Scandinavian cartoon controversy,

the impression I get is that the original cartoons were published by a publication which set out to be controversial. There was some discussion with the local Muslim community in that case locally, and that there was a certain time lag, and then riots and so on broke out in some of the Islamic world. If I'm not mistaken, they were fueled more than anything by collections of pictures which were circulated, presumably by Muslims, which were far more offensive to Islam than what appeared in the original publication. And that was one element in fueling the controversy.

Answer: Our simple point was that an apology somewhere along the line early on would have been appropriate. Because such sensitivities were fueled, it's good to quell the situation before it gets out of hand. If the media starts an international incident unknowingly, it can also stop it knowingly. Our sense was that not enough was done early on to respond in some kind of sensitive way to the concerns. Thank you very much again.

18

The Dawson College Incident

Shanta Srivastava

[While the congress was in progress, a shooting incident occurred at Dawson College on September 13, 2007. One person was killed. What follows is a report by Dr. Shanta Srivastava on the aftermath, and the resolution adopted by the congress.]

I was at the college this afternoon. The college community is preparing itself to accept the tragic event and to move on. I would like to read a message from the Reverend Dr. Karen A. Hamilton, general secretary, Canadian Council of Churches, Le Conseil canadien des Eglises, Toronto, expressing sentiments we all share.

> The Global Congress on World's Religions After September 11 meeting in Montreal, Canada, expresses its deep compassion and extends its heartfelt prayers for healing the hole in our hearts, to the students of Dawson College, their families and friends, the citizens of Montreal and, indeed, all the people of Canada. The death of even one human being, in our view, diminishes all of humanity. The congress has brought together followers of the world's religions from around the globe to meet on the fifth anniversary of the horrific tragedy of September 11th. We need to remember that devastating tragedy, to proclaim compassion, to call for healing, and to strengthen ourselves for the continual work for peace. Sadly, we have to face tragic events such as the shooting at Dawson College in Montreal. Lives have been lost, and so many are devastated. The fear is real. However, so is our passionate commitment to a steadfast prayer and to a spirited work

with a united humanity towards a common goal of world peace. May this peace pervade through all schools, communities and countries.

With this thought, let us now join together and observe one minute of silence.

Om shanti shanti shanti.

Thank you.

19

Pieces of the Jigsaw Puzzle

Arvind Sharma

Recent developments such as those of September 11, 2001, the more recent war in Lebanon, and the foiled terrorist attempts have led several people to ask: What is going on? How do we explain all this? How do the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, right before our eyes, fit together, if at all? Here is an attempt to answer this question—in part—by identifying some of the pieces of the puzzle and leaving it to the members of the audience to see how they might fit.

The first piece may be called the *Islamic hypothesis.* This is the Muslim belief that Islam constitutes the final revelation, which completes and supersedes the earlier one's received by first the Jews and then the Christians. History seemed to vindicate this hypothesis, for the frontiers of Islam essentially kept expanding from the seventh to the eighteenth century, so that Muslims could live in the confident expectation of seeing Islam become the major if not the sole religion of the world. This expectation was frustrated by the rise of the West and when Napoleon marched into Egypt it became painfully clear that things were not going according to plan. The Islamic self-confidence in its ultimate destiny however, though dented, was never destroyed.

The second piece of the puzzle may be called the *secular hypothesis.* Western civilization had seized firm control of the Islamic and indeed the rest of the world by the beginning of the twentieth century, and, in the course of doing so, had evolved its own vision of history, which we may call the *secular hypothesis.* This is the crucial belief of modernity that, as societies progress economically and politically, religion will either disappear altogether (as in some forms of Marxism) or that religion would at least disappear from public life and become a purely private affair (as per the Western liberal tradition). Everything seemed to be going according to plan until 1979, when the Iranian

Revolution occurred. It heralded the reentry of religion in the public square with a bang and was followed by the rise of fundamentalism, not only in the Islam, but also in Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Christianity as well. We need to be subtle, however, in our understanding of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is a religious tradition's response to its perceived loss of power in the public square, whereas orthodoxy is a religious tradition's response to its perceived loss of piety in the public square. One can sometimes mimic the other, hence the need to distinguish between the two. It is also worth noting that if we view the situation in terms of these hypotheses, the so-called clash of civilizations boils down to a clash of these hypotheses and to that extent becomes "hypothetical." But I digress.

The dramatic challenge to the secular hypothesis posed by the rise of fundamentalism was succeeded by another development called *globalization.* Whereas the resurgence of fundamentalism within Islam had earlier on been a local phenomenon manifesting itself in different countries, the connectivity of globalization enabled it to become a global phenomenon—a fact spectacularly demonstrated by the events of September 11, 2001. National struggles now took on the air of a global confrontation between two civilizations, the Western and the Islamic. The two civilizations have stuck to their hypotheses in the course of this confrontation, Islamic civilization to the Islamic hypothesis and Western civilization to the secular hypothesis, as is clear from the fact that militant Islam wants to extend the application of the *sharia* among its constituencies even in the West, while the West tries to bring about secular regime changes in Islamic countries.

This development is crucial because such globalization converts what, from one point of view, could be regarded as merely local and criminal, into something global and ideological. For instance, the events of September 11 could be looked upon from a certain point of view as *criminal acts* rather than acts of *war.* Crime is combated *within* a state; while war is typically fought between states. This provides the fourth element in the puzzle: the *transformation of crime into war.* This development is very significant because while humanity has been relatively successful in combating crime within national borders, it has miserably failed in preventing war across national borders. This point also loops back into the previous point about globalization, for as a consequence of globalization terrorist activity acquires an international character. But there is a wrinkle. Criminal acts are typically random violent acts, while wars between states are forms of more or less organized violence. The random character of terrorism does not fit this model and hence modern states find it hard to tackle, while on account of the new ideological orientation it has acquired, it can no longer be treated merely as a series of disparate local criminal acts and be contained as such. When President Bush described the perpetrators of the August 10 events as *fascists,* he might have done so as a rhetorical flourish but its significance is deeply analytical because fascism uses the state, which is an instrument to prevent crime, as an agent for committing it.

Now a fifth point. This confrontation between the two civilizations, however, is complicated by an *internal tension* within the two civilizations. In the case of Islam it may be expressed through the statement that whereas, in the recent incidents, all terrorists were Muslims, all Muslims are not terrorists. In other words, there are sections within the Islamic world, whom we may call moderates, who favor a rapprochement with the West. Similarly, not all in the West favor a confrontationist approach in dealing with the Islamic world. The growing opposition to the war in the Iraq, for instance, seems to suggest this. Thus, there are moderates in the Islamic as well as the Western world who might well prefer a rapprochement. Both of them, however, have to contend with those who hold more extreme positions within their civilizational zones.

A sixth point is provided by the consideration that these internal tensions are exacerbated by the *civic tension* which exists in all societies between security and freedom. As the threat perception from the other within both the civilizational communities increases, both become more willing to sacrifice freedom for security, which tends to strengthen the hands of the extremist elements within them. It also leads to a paradox: Western societies, which champion freedom, seem to compromise it in the fight against terrorism, while the terrorists can claim that they are fighting for the freedom of their communities.

These six pieces of the jigsaw puzzle may all appear scattered and incoherent until pointed attention is drawn to another aspect of the situation alluded to earlier: that the Iranian Revolution reversed the trend toward the elimination of religion from public life and all indications since point to a return of religion in the public arena. All these six pieces of the jigsaw puzzle seem to make sense once seen as part of this greater picture—that religion is bent on asserting its role in public life with varying degrees of vigor, not excluding violence, notwithstanding the complexities involved.

Here we need to take stock of a fundamental point: that religions become a negative force in human life when they work against each other and come in conflict, and that they become a positive force in human life when they come together and work together. The effort to bring them together to frame, if possible, a *Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions* is rooted in this insight. The whole argument may be summarized as follows. Religion is a force in human affairs. The secular view that it is nothing but a bad dream which will go away does not seem to be working. But if religion is going to be a force then like other forces, it can be harnessed for both good or evil. Electricity can warm our house, it can also electrocute us. Fire can cook our meal and also burn the house down. So the question is: how can we help religion become a positive force?

As noted earlier, the key lies in making religions work together and the release of the draft of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions is one such effort. The representatives of so many religions have already participated in it that the document does not even possess a determinate author. It is true that it was originally drawn up at the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University but it has since undergone many changes and

revisions and can no longer be assigned to an individual, or even a committee. Anyone who has contributed to it in any way or supported it in any way can lay claim to it, which is all to the good, for in such matters the process is as important as the product.

We hope it would be the legacy of this congress that it set a process in motion—a process whereby the religions of the world would begin to actively participate in human rights discourse in a way which might culminate some day in the adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions. For were this to happen, it would demonstrate to a skeptical world that, not only can the religions of the world work together, but also, that even the religious and the secular dimensions of life can be brought together to ensure human flourishing.

Numerous suggestions have been received regarding the draft document which was formally released at this congress and which had been accessible to the delegates even earlier. We would now like to collect, collate, and consolidate all these suggestions, and such other suggestions which we hope you will continue to offer, even after the congress is over. Our current thinking in the matter is to let the draft document circulate in the academic and faith communities for a few years, while we garner the responses it generates, until such time as we may be able to convene a representative gathering of the world's religions to discuss them. The next Parliament of World's Religions will meet in 2009. It might well turn out to be the right forum in which to pursue this ongoing project. Please be assured that you would be first to know of this, or any such move which might be taken, to carry the torch further.

All of you have put us under your great debt by participating in this congress and initiating this process and this is particularly true of the generous sponsors of this event. It is not possible for us to thank everyone individually from this podium, but we hope you will accept our thanks as we offer them collectively. We have demonstrated that people with different religious and cultural backgrounds can work together in pursuit of a common goal, and this is important because what has happened once can happen again.

What exists is possible—let this be our mantra as I gratefully take leave of you. God bless.

Afterword

Jean Duhaime

Presque deux mille personnes se sont réunies ici à Montréal pendant une semaine pour partager leurs idées et leurs réflexions, sur le thème de notre congrès.

I want to thank all of you for having come to Montreal, for having shared your thoughts, friendship, prayers, and your joy during this whole week of discussions. To those already offered, I want to add very warm thanks to the organizers of this congress: the Steering Committee, the members of the Program Committee, the Tradition Chairs, the advisors, the consultants, and specially also to the staff of Sorelcomm, who has put all this together with great competence.

Les événements du 11 septembre 2001 et leurs conséquences ont provoqué partout dans le monde une réflexion sur les défis de la rencontre entre les visions du monde et les traditions religieuses dans toute leur diversité. Notre congrès s'est voulu une contribution à cette réflexion.

We have shared our views:

- about religions as sources of meaning and values for individuals,
- about religions as providing a view of our environment as a place to respect and to safeguard,
- about the role of religions in the building of justice and peace,
- about religion as developing among human beings a compassionate and caring attitude toward one another.

This is the brightest side of our religions, the one that we cherish, and which makes religions so precious for us.

Mais nous avons aussi discuté du côté sombre des religions

- *des dérives fondamentalistes et intégristes qu'elles peuvent provoquer*
- *de la somnolence dans laquelle elles peuvent nous entraîner par rapport aux problèmes réels de notre monde*
- *des abus de pouvoir qu'elles peuvent légitimer*
- *des formes de discrimination qu'elles entretiennent*
- *des tensions qu'elles génèrent dans les sociétés sécularisés*
- *des affrontements interreligieux et des prétentions à la vérité absolue auxquelles on peut céder si facilement...*

We have lived this week as a deep encounter between people of goodwill. As we leave this meeting and return back home, we still have much to think about, and even more to do.

We have to spread around us in our local communities what we have learned here from one another. And we have to make sure that it reaches the grassroots of our communities and the streets of our cities.

Nous avons aussi à interpeller, dans nos propres communautés, les personnes et les groupes qui, avec la meilleure volonté du monde, estiment qu'il est de leur devoir de résister à l'ouverture et au dialogue et qui ne voient pas comment on peut accueillir avec joie et sympathie l'expérience spirituelle de l'autre. Nos sociétés traversent un grave crise de valeur et de sens, comme vient de nous rappeler le tragique événement de mercredi au collège Dawson.[1]

As we go back home, let us commit ourselves to be credible witnesses to the brightest side of our religious traditions and spiritualities so that the younger generations may find light and joy in living a meaningful and responsible life. Merci à tous. Bon retour. Thank you all. Have a safe trip back home!

Note

1. Le collège Dawson est CÉGEP anglophone situé à Westmount près du centre-ville de Montréal. Le 13 septembre 2006, un tireur y a ouvert le feu tuant une personne et en blessant 19 autres. Il s'est ensuite donné la mort, après avoir été atteint au bras par un policier.

Index

About the Editor and Contributors

The Editor

ARVIND SHARMA has been a member of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University since 1987. He has held fellowships at the Center for the Study of World Religions, the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, and the Center for Business and Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University; and at the Brookings Institute. He also received a Maxwell Fellowship and was elected Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, London in 1987. He is the author of *Are Human Rights Western?* (2006) and *Religious Studies and Comparative Methodology* (2005).

The Contributors

SEYYED MOHAMMAD ALI ABTAHI was born in Mashhad (Khorasan province of Iran) in 1958. He actively participated in the Iranian Revolution after graduating from a theological seminary and was appointed director general of Islamic Republic of Iran Radio. He worked in close association with President Khatami and served as vice president of Parliamentary Legal Affairs during his second tenure. He has been an active participant in interreligious dialogue throughout his career.

KAREN ARMSTRONG spent seven years as a Roman Catholic nun in the 1960s, but left her teaching order in 1969. She studied English literature at Oxford University, earning the degrees of B.A. and M.Litt. Since then she has taught modern literature at the University of London, headed the English department in a girls' public school, and taught part-time at the Leo Baeck College for the Study of Judaism and the Training of Rabbis and Teachers. Since 1982, she has devoted her life to writing, lecturing, and broadcasting on religious affairs.

Her books include *Through the Narrow Gate; Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World; Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet; A History of God; Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths; In the Beginning: A New Interpretation of Genesis; The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism; Islam: A Short History; Buddha; The Spiral Staircase;* and *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions.* Her work has been translated into forty languages. She is also the author of three television documentaries and took part in Bill Moyers's television series *Genesis.* In 1999, she was awarded the Muslim Public Affairs Council Media Award.

Since September 11, 2001, she has been a frequent contributor to conferences, panels, newspapers, periodicals, and throughout the media on both sides of the Atlantic on the subject of Islam and fundamentalism. She lives in London.

GREGORY BAUM is Professor Emeritus at McGill University's Faculty of Religious Studies. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from McMaster University (1946), a Master's in Arts degree from Ohio State University (1947), and a Th.D. from University of Fribourg (1956). Thus, his academic education was in Catholic theology and sociology; his publications deal with ecumenical relations, interreligious dialogue, and the religious quest for a just and peaceful world. During the Vatican Council (1962–1965), he was an appointed theologian at the Ecumenical Secretariat, responsible for the conciliar documents on Ecumenism, Religious Liberty, and the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1990.

Dr. JANET EPP BUCKINGHAM serves as director of Law and Public Policy in the Ottawa office of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. In this capacity, she speaks to government and intervenes before the courts on issues from an evangelical Christian perspective which include religious freedom, marriage and family, sanctity of life, and care for the vulnerable in our society. Dr. Buckingham has an LL.B. from Dalhousie University and an LL.D. from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, where she completed a dissertation focusing on religious freedom. She is also a spokesperson at the United Nations for the World Evangelical Alliance.

HARVEY COX, Jr., is the Hollis Professor of Divinity, the oldest endowed professorship in America. He has been teaching at Harvard since 1965, both at Harvard Divinity School and in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Harvey Cox was born in Malvern, Pennsylvania, received his A.B. with honors in history from the University of Pennsylvania, his B.D. from Yale University Divinity School, and his Ph.D. from Harvard University in history and philosophy of religion. An American Baptist minister, he was the Protestant chaplain at Temple University and the campus minister at Oberlin College; he was also an ecumenical fraternal worker in Berlin for a year just after the Wall was built, passing regularly through "Checkpoint Charlie" to facilitate communication

between East and West. Later, he was professor of theology and culture at Andover Newton Theological School. His book *The Secular City,* published in 1965, became an international bestseller and has been translated into thirteen languages and most recently in Russian. His *Feast of Fools* was nominated for the National Book Prize.

Among his other books are *Many Mansions: A Christian's Encounters with Other Faiths* (1988), and the section on Christianity in *Our Religions* (edited by Arvind Sharma, 1993), a collection of articles by scholar-practitioners of the seven major world faiths, and *Fire from Heaven* which traces the worldwide growth of Pentecostalism. Among Dr. Cox's interests are urbanization, theological developments in world Christianity, Jewish-Christian relations, and current spiritual movements in the global setting (especially in Latin America and Asia; and particularly the global growth of Pentecostalism). His current research project is the history of Christian interpretations of Islam. He has been a visiting professor at Brandeis University, Seminario Bautista de Mexico; the Naropa Institute; and the University of Michigan. Among his most recent books are *Common Prayers: Faith, Family, and a Christian's Journey Through the Jewish Year,* and his latest book, *When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today* (2004).

In the 1960s, Dr. Cox was a cofounder of the Boston chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization headed nationally by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He has also served as a member of the Working Committee of the Dept. of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches and as a consultant to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Latin America.

He is married to Dr. Nina Tumarkin, professor of Russian History at Wellesley College. They have one son, Nicholas, born in 1986. Harvey Cox also plays lead tenor saxophone with a Boston-based Big band called "Soft Touch."

DHANASHREE SHREENIVAS TALWALKAR is known affectionately as "Didi" (meaning elder sister) to millions of Indians who have been touched by the idea of Swadhyaya. Rev. Pandurang Shastri Athavale, Rev. Dada, her father, is the fountainhead of Swadhyaya—a reason-devotion-based global phenomenon started by him as a grassroots initiative more than six decades ago. She has an umbilical relationship with Swadhyaya. She grew up in an ambience that transcends traditional piety and unreasoned acceptance of tradition but encourages cultivation of classical learning and wisdom.

Rev. Dada, a giant universal personality, molded her life. He devised the core curriculum and a nonformal system of education for her and also ensured formal training in art, music, and military disciplines. She completed her Masters in Philosophy with distinction from the prestigious Elphinstone College of Mumbai University.

After a short stint as a lecturer in Elphinstone College in the late 1970s, she immersed herself totally in Rev. Dada's work. Due to her wisdom and enormous capacity to love and motivate people, she has found the love and respect of one and all of the millions of Swadhyayees spread across the world. After Rev. Dada's

demise in the year 2003, she has continued with Rev. Dada's focus in Swadhyaya. At the same time, she has provided a contemporary context to Swadhyaya. She has captured the imagination of the youth and the women and engaged them in various projects at various levels, catapulting Swadhyaya into the mainstream of society. The youth participation in Swadhyaya has grown exponentially due to her astute efforts and motivation. With this she has also emerged as the most prominent youth icon in the society. In India, she commands the matchless strength of rural as well as urban youth as she has successfully narrowed their divide, an arduous task even for the most seasoned politician.

Despite Rev. Dada's physical absence, Swadhyaya pariwar is finding its footing, vitality, enthusiasm, and momentum because of her all pervasive and holistic approach. She has judiciously used the edifice created by Rev. Dada to initiate projects for mass awareness and empowerment, community development, hygiene, medical care, disaster recuperation, rural development, harnessing of youth strength and the integrated development of women, children, and families.

With exceptional understanding and clarity of Rev. Dada's vision, thoughts, and methods, Didi has drawn out various dimensions and contemporary global relevance of Swadhyaya, basically a grassroots initiative, for the academia at various national and international forums. Notable amongst them are the following:

- Speaker at the International Colloquium on Environment—Living with the Earth Intercultural Institute of Montreal.
- Plenary speaker and signatory to the resolution at the Centenary of Parliament of World's Religions, Chicago, USA.
- Presentation at the Conference on Hunger and Poverty by IFAD at Brussels.
- Presentation at the Hague Appeal for Peace on the role of religion in promoting peace.
- Presentation at the Prayer for Universal Peace organized by The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, Vatican, at behest of Pope John Paul II at Assisi, Rome.
- Presentation at the special gathering organized by UNICEF in New York on the occasion of a session on children at the UNO.
- Presentation at the Inter-faith Meet held by the Focolare Movement at London.
- Presentation as the Member of Governing Council of Arigatou Foundation, Tokyo, for the initiative to impart Ethical Education to the Children of world—in association with UNICEF.

JEAN DUHAIME is professor of Biblical Interpretation in the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Montreal, where he has taught since 1976; he has been dean of the Faculty since 2005. His areas of interest include the Prophets, the Psalms, and Wisdom literature, as well as the contribution of the social sciences to the study of the Bible. He specializes in the study of the Qumran documents (Dead Sea Scrolls) and is the author of numerous essays on the subject, including chapters in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years*

after Their Discovery, 1947–1997 (2000) and *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and J.C. Vander Kam, 2000), as well as a recent book, *The War Texts: 1 QM and Related Manuscripts* (2004). Prof. Duhaime has been active in interfaith dialogue for many years and is president of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue in Montreal (CJDM). He is also a member of the Communauté chrétienne St.-Albert-le-Grand (St. Albert the Great Christian Community) in Montreal.

SHIRIN EBADI was born in the city of Hamedan (northwestern Iran) in 1947. Her family were academics and practising Muslims. Her father, Mohammad Ali Ebadi, was the head of Hamedan's Registry Office at the time of her birth. He was one of the first lecturers in commercial law and had written several books. He passed away in 1993.

She spent her childhood in a family filled with kindness and affection. She has two sisters and a brother, all of whom are highly educated. Her mother dedicated all her time and devotion to their upbringing.

She came to Tehran with her family when she was one year old and has since been a resident in the capital. She began her education at Firuzkuhi primary school and went on to Anoshiravn Dadgar and Reza Shah Kabir secondary schools for her higher education. She sat for the Tehran University entrance exams and gained a place at the Faculty of Law in 1965. She received her law degree in three-and-a-half years, and immediately sat for the entrance exams for the Department of Justice. After a six-month apprenticeship in adjudication, she began to serve officially as a judge in March 1969. While serving as a judge, she continued her education and obtained a doctorate with honours in private law from Tehran University in 1971.

She held a variety of positions in the Justice Department. In 1975, she became the president of Bench 24 of the Tehran City Court. She is the first woman in the history of Iranian justice to have served as a judge. Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979, since the belief was that Islam forbids women to serve as judges, she and other female judges were dismissed from their posts and given clerical duties. They made her a clerk in the very court she once presided over. They all protested. As a result, they promoted all former female judges, including her, to the position of "experts" in the Justice Department. She could not tolerate the situation any longer, and so put in a request for early retirement. Her request was accepted. Since the Bar Association had remained closed for some time since the revolution and was being managed by the Judiciary, her application for practicing law was turned down. She was, in effect, housebound for many years. Finally, in 1992 she succeeded in obtaining a lawyer's license and set up her own practice.

She used her time of unemployment to write several books and had many articles published in Iranian journals. After receiving her lawyer's license, she accepted to defend many cases. Some were national cases. Among them, she represented the families of the serial murder victims (the family of Dariush and Parvaneh Foruhar) and Ezzat Ebrahiminejad, who were killed during the

attack on the university dormitory. She also participated in some press-related cases. She took on a large number of social cases, too, including child abuse. Recently, she agreed to represent the mother of Mrs Zahra Kazemi, a photojournalist killed in Iran.

In December 2004, she filed a suit along with her literary agent to challenge U.S. laws prohibiting her from publishing in America because of her Iranian citizenship. The suit was successful, and *Iran Awakening*, her first book for a U.S. audience, was published in May 2006.

She is married to an electrical engineer and has two daughters. One is studying for a doctorate in telecommunications at McGill University in Canada. The other studies law at Tehran University.

DOUGLAS ELLIOTT is a partner in the Toronto law firm of Roy Elliott Kim O'Connor LLP. He received his B.A. from the University of Western Ontario in 1979, and his LL.B. from the University of Toronto in 1982. He was called to the Bar in Ontario in 1984, and certified by the Law Society of Upper Canada as a Specialist in Civil Litigation in 2003.

Mr. Elliott is one of Canada's leading constitutional lawyers, with many Supreme Court cases to his credit. He has frequently and successfully advocated for the equality and rights of gays and lesbians, including their rights to religious freedom. His notable cases include *Vriend v. Alberta* (right of gays and lesbians to equal benefit of antidiscrimination law), *Trinity Western University* (right of graduates of evangelical university that condemned homosexuality as sinful to have its graduates licensed as public school teachers), *M. v. H.* (right of same sex "common law" couples to equal rights with opposite sex "common law" couples), and *Hall v. Durham Catholic Board of Education* (right of gay student to bring same sex date to Catholic school's graduation prom).

Mr. Elliott was the successful senior counsel for the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto in the Ontario same-sex marriage case, and in the Supreme Court *Reference Re Same Sex Marriage.* In addition to representing the Church in the litigation, Mr. Elliott has been a member of the congregation for over ten years.

Mr. Elliott has been recognized with a number of awards, including the "Leadership Award" of the Canadian AIDS Society, the "Hero Award" from the Canadian Bar Association's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee, the "Lawyer of the Year" Award from the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, the "Distinguished Service Award" from the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists, the "Founder's Award" from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, and the "Community Service Award" from the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto.

Rev. BRENT HAWKES has been the Senior Pastor at the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto for over twenty-six years.

Rev. Hawkes is a native of Bath, New Brunswick and a graduate of Mount Allison University. He received a Masters of Divinity degree from Trinity

College, University of Toronto. In May 2001, Rev. Hawkes received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity College.

As the Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, Rev. Hawkes has been at the forefront of ministry to the Gay and Lesbian Community in Toronto. He serves as spiritual leader to a faith community of some 575 congregants at regular Sunday worship. As well, he has served the community at large with distinction, championing several Human Rights initiatives, especially benefiting the gay and lesbian community.

In 1994, Rev. Hawkes received the City of Toronto Award of Merit, the highest civilian award given by the City of Toronto. In 1995, he received a Global Citizen Award from the United Nations Toronto Association, for his work in advancing human rights in Canada. Rev. Hawkes has also received the Distinguished Service Award from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. In June 2000, Rev. Hawkes was honored as the patron of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives Gala where his portrait was unveiled as a "Builder of Tolerance." At the UFMCC World Jubilee and General Conference held in Toronto in July 2001, Rev. Hawkes was honored with the UFMCC Human Rights Award. In December 2003, he was awarded the City of Toronto's Access, Equity and Human Rights Award, the Pride Award.

Rev. Hawkes lives with his partner of twenty-three years, John Sproule, in Toronto, Canada.

PADMANABH S. JAINI is a scholar of Jainism and Buddhism, who, although born in a Digambara family, is equally familiar with both the Digambara and Svetambara forms of Jainism. He has taught at the Banaras Hindu University, the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and at the University of California at Berkeley, from where he retired in 1994.

Professor Jaini is the author of several books and papers. Perhaps his best known work is the *Jaina Path of Purification* (1979). Some of his major articles have been published under the titles *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (2000) and *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies* (2001).

Professor Jaini lives in Berkeley.

RABBI DOW MARMUR was born in Poland in 1935 and spent the years of World War II in the Soviet Union before returning to Poland in 1946. Two years later, he emigrated to Sweden, where he went to school. In 1957, he moved to London, England to study for the rabbinate at the Leo Baeck College, from which he graduated in 1962.

Before becoming Senior Rabbi of Holy Blossom in 1983, Rabbi Marmur served two congregations in Britain. He retired from his position of Senior Rabbi at Holy Blossom Temple in 2000.

Rabbi Marmur has enjoyed an impressive career outside the synagogue walls, most recently as Interim Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, in Jerusalem. He's also a senior lecturer in the Faculty

of Theology, University of St. Michael's College and senior fellow, Massey College, University of Toronto.

Rabbi Marmur has written six books and edited two. His articles—on Jewish theology, Zionism, Israel, marriage and related problems, and Jewish/Christian relations—have appeared in Jewish and non-Jewish publications in Britain, Canada, and elsewhere.

Dr. SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR was born in 1933 in Tehran, Iran in a family of educators and scholars, his father having been one of the founders of the Persian educational system. Consequently, he received the best classical Persian and Islamic education during his early years in Tehran. He later came to the West to finish his secondary education at the Peddie School in New Jersey and after graduating as the valedictorian of his class, he went to MIT where he studied physics and mathematics and graduated with honors in 1954. Meanwhile, his interest turned to an ever greater degree to philosophy and the history of science and he transferred to Harvard University, to pursue graduate studies, first in the field of geology and geophysics in order to acquaint himself with a descriptive as well as a mathematical science, and finally in the field of the history of science and philosophy in which he received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1958, with specialization in Islamic cosmology and science. From 1958 until 1979, he was professor of the history of science and philosophy at Tehran University and for several years the dean of the Faculty of Letters and for sometime the vice-chancellor of the University. He also served for several years as president of Aryamehr University in Iran. In 1962 and 1965, he was visiting professor at Harvard University and in 1964–65, the first Aga Khan Professor of Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut. He was also the founder and first president of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy.

In 1979, Dr. Nasr migrated to the United States where he became first the distinguished professor of Islamic studies at the University of Utah, then from 1979 to 1984 professor of Islamic studies at Temple University. Since 1984 he has been University Professor of Islamic studies at the George Washington University.

Dr. Nasr has lectured widely throughout the United States, Western Europe, most of the Islamic world, India, Australia, and Japan. He has also given several major lectures such as the Azad Memorial Lecture in India, the Iqbal Lecture in Pakistan, the Charles Strong Memorial Lecture in Australia, the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and the Cadbury Lectures at Birmingham University in England. He has also been for ten years a member of the directing committee of FISP (Federation Internationale des Societes Philosophiques) and a member of the Institut International de Philosophie.

Dr. Nasr is the author of over thirty books and over 300 articles. His works concern not only various aspects of Islamic studies but also comparative philosophy and religion, philosophy of art, religion and science, and the philosophical and religious dimensions of the environmental crisis.

Rev. DONALD POSTERSKI serves as the director of "Faith and Development" for World Vision International. His primary mandate includes working with World Vision leaders and developing strategies relating to Christian formation, Christian witness, and Church partnerships. His work requires him to travel extensively and interface with the cultural dynamics of other world religions.

A Christian humanitarian development, relief and advocacy organization, World Vision works primarily in the developing world, but also responds to refugees, aboriginal peoples, and others with extraordinary needs within Canada. Church-based programs—such as NeighbourLink and publications such as *Envision* and *Voices*—reflect the commitment to respond to those in need and to use research to serve church leaders. Don and his wife Beth reside in Toronto, Canada.

Utilizing research data, Don has written several books connecting the Gospel with culture. Addressing church and society concerns, he coauthored several youth culture publications with sociologist Reginald Bibby. He authored *Reinventing Evangelism* and *True to You: Living Our Faith in Our Multi-minded World,* a book on how to deal with diversity while living as a faithful follower of Jesus in today's postmodern society. *Future Faith Churches: Reconnecting with the Power of the Gospel for the 21st Century* profiles effective churches in Canada.

Don's latest book continues to advocate "Principled Pluralism" as a creative response to the increasing diversity that swirls around us. In 2004, InterVarsity Press released *Enemies with Smiling Faces: Defeating the Subtle Threats That Endanger Christians.* He is also research professor of Christianity and Culture at Tyndale University College and Seminary.

A nationally acknowledged researcher and author, Don frequently responds to requests to interpret social trends and religious issues for the media. And he takes time with his wife Beth and friends to enjoy the challenge of eliminating the "slice" in his golf swing.

RABBI DAVID ROSEN is the president of IJCIC, the International Jewish Committee that represents World Jewry in its relations with other world religions. He is director of the Department for Interreligious Affairs and director of the Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding of the American Jewish Committee.

In November 2005 at a ceremony in Jerusalem, Rabbi Rosen was named a papal Knight Commander of the order of St. Gregory the Great for his outstanding contributions to promoting Catholic-Jewish reconciliation.

Rabbi Rosen is an international president of WCRP (World Conference of Religion for Peace), the all-encompassing world interfaith body (incorporating fifteen religions in over fifty countries); he is honorary president of ICCJ (International Council of Christians and Jews), the umbrella organization for more than thirty national bodies promoting Christian-Jewish relations (the ICCJ's Abrahamic Forum promotes dialogue between Muslims, Christians, and Jews) and serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the World

Congress of Imams and Rabbis. Rabbi Rosen is a charter member of the International Advisory Committee of CPWR (Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions); and is a member of the World Economic Forum's C-100, a council of 100 leaders formed for the purpose of improving relations and cooperation between the Muslim and Western worlds. He was one of the initiators and participants of The Alexandria Summit, the first Middle East Interfaith Summit with the participation of the leaders of the three monotheistic faiths of the Holy Land, held in Alexandria, Egypt, and is a member of its PCIAD (Permanent Committee for the Implementation of the Alexandria Declaration); and he was a member of the Permanent Bilateral Commission of the State of Israel and the Holy See that negotiated the normalization of relations between the two.

Rabbi Rosen is a member of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's delegation for interreligious dialogue with the Holy See and is a founder of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel that embraces some seventy organizations in Israel involved in interfaith relations.

After an absence of some eleven years, he returned to Israel in 1985 to take up the appointment of dean at the Sapir Center for Jewish Education and Culture in the Old City of Jerusalem and subsequently became professor of Jewish Studies at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. At that time he also served as the Anti-Defamation League's director of Interfaith Relations in Israel and as the ADL's coliaison to the Vatican. In 1997, he was appointed to the position of director of the ADL Israel office.

From 1979 to 1985, Rabbi Rosen was Chief Rabbi of Ireland where he founded, together with the Christian Primates of Ireland, the Irish Council of Christians and Jews. He was a member of the Academic Council as well as lecturer at the Irish School of Ecumenics.

From 1975 to 1979, he was the Senior Rabbi of the largest Jewish congregation in South Africa and rabbinic judge on the Ecclesiastical Court (Beth Din). He was also founder/chairman of the Inter-faith Forum, the Council of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER has been a pioneer Christian feminist theologian for over three decades, and among the most widely read feminist theologians in North America. Her book, *Sexism and God-Talk,* a classic in the field of feminist theology, remains the only systematic feminist treatment of the Christian symbols to date. To categorize her as a feminist theologian, however, is to risk neglecting the broad scope of her interests. With wide-ranging scholarship and a penchant for finding the hidden connections among seemingly disparate fields, Ruether has written and edited close to twenty books and hundreds of articles and reviews. She is seemingly at home in such diverse fields as patristics, the historical and theological roots of anti-Semitism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history of women in American religion, liberation theology, the mythology of the Ancient Near East, and ecology. Currently, she teaches at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Sri SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI is a distinguished, traditional teacher of Vedanta. His depth of understanding and nuanced appreciation of Western culture makes him that rare teacher who can communicate the vision of nonduality to modern listeners. He is able to make one see, with immediacy, the truth of oneself as the whole.

Swami Dayananda has been teaching Vedanta in India for more than four decades, and around the world since 1976. In his public talks abroad, Swamiji has spoken at many of the most prestigious American universities, and has addressed international conventions, UNESCO and the United Nations, where he participated in the Millennium Peace Summit.

A teacher of teachers, Swami Dayananda designed and taught six resident in-depth Vedanta courses, each spanning thirty to thirty-six months. Four were conducted in India, and two in the United States. Each course graduated about sixty qualified acharyas, teachers, who are now teaching around the world. More than one hundred are now swamis and are highly respected as scholars and teachers throughout India and abroad.

Under Swami Dayananda's guidance, numerous centers for Vedic teaching have been founded around the world. The two main centers in India are the Arsha Vidya Ashram in Rishikesh and the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Coimbatore. In the United States, the main center is the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam at Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. At present there are at least sixty centers in India and abroad that carry on the same tradition of Vedantic teaching.

In addition to teaching, Swami Dayananda has initiated and supported various philanthropic efforts. The AIM (All India Movement) for Seva, inaugurated in November 2000, brings medical, educational, nutritional, and infrastructure assistance to villagers in the remote areas of India. This movement enjoys the blessing of all traditional Hindu spiritual leaders who have united as a single body, the Acarya Sabha, through the coordinating efforts of Swami Dayananda. In November 2001, Swami Dayananda convened the first World Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity in Delhi, inaugurated by the Dalai Lama and the then Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee. An important outcome of the Congress is the formation of a Global Commission for the Preservation of Religious Diversity, spearheaded by Swami Dayananda. The Commission had its inaugural meeting in Bangkok in June, 2002. Swami Dayananda was also active in forming and participating in the Women's Global Peace Initiative, which convened at the United Nations in Geneva in October 2002.

SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR's message of compassion, commitment to society, and a universal understanding of life, has resounded in the lives of millions worldwide. Through the regeneration of human values, he seeks global peace and development by inspiring individuals towards self-awareness, joyful living and selfless service. His commitment to humanity is evident in his extensive travel to 175 cities in 2004.

Born in 1956 in Papanasam, India, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar studied with many renowned spiritual masters and became a scholar of Vedic Literature. By the

age of seventeen, he obtained an Advanced Degree in Modern Physics, and later received an Honorary Doctorate from Kuvempu University, Karnataka, India.

In 1982, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar founded the Art of Living Foundation, which is now one of the world's largest volunteer NGOs, active in more than 146 countries. In 2006, the Foundation celebrated twenty-five years of service and celebration in Bangalore, India where more than a record 2.5 million meditated and prayed for world peace.

In 1997, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar founded IAHV (International Association for Human Values), which to date has development projects in 25,300 villages, bringing self-reliance and sustainability to millions of people. Through the IAHV, large volunteer relief efforts have been delivered across the globe. Aid has been provided to war stricken people in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Iraq. Trauma relief programs were launched for those affected by the earthquake in Gujarat, 9/11 in New York, and more recently the tsunami in Sri Lanka and India. IAHV volunteers are continuously providing trauma relief and stress management in these areas.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar travels to more than thirty-five countries every year to reinforce the message that all religions and spiritual traditions share common goals and values. His simple message of love, practical wisdom, and service encourages harmony and teaches everyone to follow their chosen religious or spiritual path while honoring the path of others. Those who have listened to him acknowledge the universal inclusiveness of his appeal.

His Holiness is the recipient of numerous honors including "Bharat Shiromani" (Supreme Jewel of India) by the Home Minister of India (April 2005), the title of the Illustrious Visitor, Argentina (2004), Phoenix Award awarded by the Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, USA (April 2002), "Guru Mahatmya" award by the Government of Maharashtra, India (September 1997), the title of "Yoga Shiromani" (Supreme Jewel of Yoga) by the president of India (1986), and many more. Sri Sri was also nominated for the Nobel Peace prize in 2006.

HUSTON SMITH is an eminent scholar of world's religions and the author of *The World's Religions* (original title: *The Religions of Man*), which has sold over 2.4 million copies, making it the most widely read book on world religions. He has taught at Washington University, MIT, Syracuse University, and the University of California at Berkeley. Bill Moyers developed in 1996 a five-part PBS special called The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith, devoted to his life and work. A recent work to which the author attaches considerable significance is his book entitled *Why Religion Matters.*

MARGARET SOMERVILLE, AM, FRSC is an Australian/Canadian ethicist and academic. She is the Samuel Gale Professor of Law, professor in the Faculty of Medicine, and the founding director of the Faculty of Law's Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University.

Born in Adelaide, South Australia, she received an A.u.A. (pharm.) from the University of Adelaide in 1963, a Bachelor of Law degree (Hons. I) from the University of Sydney in 1973, and a D.C.L. from McGill University in 1978.

From 1963 to 1969, she was a registered pharmacist in South Australia, Victoria, New Zealand, and New South Wales. After returning to University and receiving her law degree she became an attorney for a Sydney, Australia law firm, Mallesons (as it then was) (formerly Stephen, Jacques and Stephen; now Mallesons Stephen Jaques) from 1974 to 1975.

In 1978, she was appointed as an assistant professor in the Faculty of Law at McGill University. She was appointed as an associate professor in 1979 and an associate professor in the Faculty of Medicine in 1980. In 1984, she became a full professor of the Faculty of Medicine and in 1989 was appointed the Samuel Gale Professor of Law. From 1986 to 1996, she was the founding director of the McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law and was appointed acting director in 1999.

In 1990, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia "for service to the law and to bioethics." In 1991, she was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. In 2004, she was awarded UNESCO's Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science.

She has received honorary degrees from University of Windsor (1992), Macquarie University (1993), and St. Francis Xavier University (1996). Her most recent honorary degree awarded June 19, 2006 at Ryerson University in Toronto was controversial and opposed by many students and faculty who feel her beliefs on same-sex marriage and her political lobbying against it are tantamount to homophobia. She gave the 2006 Massey Lectures.

Dr. SHANTA SRIVASTAVA, a gold medalist from Lucknow University, India, and a Ph.D. from McGill University, is a professor in biology at Dawson College, Montreal. Her keen interest in Indian culture, music, and Hinduism has inspired her to serve many Indian community organizations and temples, teach Hindi, and host a radio program. She has participated in many intercultural and interfaith events. She has been actively associated with the Sathya Sai Baba Centre in Montreal, where she serves as the spiritual coordinator.

SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI ascended the pitham, spiritual seat, of Kauai Aadheenam (also known as Kauai's Hindu monastery) as Guru Mahasannidhanam and 163rd preceptor of the Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasa Parampara, upon the passing of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami on November 12, 2001. He continues the mission of Subramuniyaswami to establish Saivite Hinduism in the West and strengthen it in the East through four major areas of service: *Hinduism Today* international magazine, Saiva Siddhanta Church, Himalayan Academy, and Hindu Heritage Endowment. *Hinduism Today* magazine is the world's foremost Hindu publication. It is published quarterly and supplemented with Hindu Press International, a daily e-mail news summary service on Hindu events and issues. Saiva Siddhanta

Church is the fellowship of initiated disciples and students and includes the Iraivan Temple project on Kauai, the first all-granite Hindu temple built in the West. Himalayan Academy publishes books by the gurus of Kauai Aadheenam and conducts courses for students. Hindu Heritage Endowment as of 2006 has assets of $8,100,000, the yearly proceeds of which fund various Hindu institutions.

Bodhinatha first met Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in September of 1964, in Virginia City, Nevada, at age twenty-one. He stated, "I want to realize God." A year later, upon completing his university education, Bodhinatha took monastic vows and moved to the monastery permanently. In 1970, Subramuniyaswami took him to Sri Lanka and introduced him to Jaffna Saivite culture and worship, just as Subramuniyaswami had been introduced in the late 1940s. In 1972, at his Sri Subramuniya Ashram in Alaveddy, Subramuniyaswami gave him sannyas diksha in a powerful ceremony. The young swami remained in Lanka another six months, pilgrimaging many times to the Columbuturai hut of Subramuniyaswami's guru, Yogaswami, for worship and meditation, as well as to the famed temples of Nallur, Kumbalavalai, and Katirgama.

Early on, Bodhinatha distinguished himself as a gifted teacher, working closely in the 1970s with the first large group of Subramuniyaswami's Western devotees to formally enter the Saivite Hindu religion. Many of those devotees are today the senior members of Saiva Siddhanta Church. As a special discipline he lived for nine months as a solitary hermit in a small hut on the ocean in Kona, Hawaii, performing worship and meditation. In 1975, Subramuniyaswami assigned him and Acharya Palaniswami to translate the *Tirukural* from Tamil into American English (published as *Weaver's Wisdom*), which they completed in 1999.

In the 1980s, Bodhinatha taught at Kauai Aadheenam on travel/study programs and accompanied Subramuniyaswami on his lecture tours to Mauritius, Malaysia, and Singapore. In 1988, after six months of pilgrimage in India, he was the first to receive acharya diksha from Subramuniyaswami. In the 1990s, while Subramuniyaswami concentrated on his Master Course trilogy, Dancing, Living and Merging with Siva, Bodhinatha travelled abroad often to minister to members and students. In 1997, Subramuniyaswami initiated him as paramacharya, empowered to confer samaya (mantra) diksha (initiation), which he did for members in Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore, and India. Behind the scenes, he has been the financial administrator and senior trustee of the Church's four corporations for twenty years.

Bodhinatha travels extensively each year and is actively immersed in a series of educational projects and international seminars that focus on bringing spiritual instruction to Hindu youth. He is also working on a series of pamphlets and books that present Subramuniyaswami's teachings in thoughtful, step-by-step style. His activities at Kauai Aadheenam are chronicled daily at http://www.himalayanacademy.com/taka/.